TRANSLATIONS
OF
CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

ST. AUGUSTINE
ON THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER

W. J. SPARROW SIMPSON, D.D.

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ON THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER

BY

W. J. SPARROW SIMPSON, D.D.

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INTRODUCTION

It may be of assistance to the reader of this Treatise to be reminded of the purpose and circumstances under which it was written and its relation to the great writer's thought. These points will be therefore discussed under the following divisions :

I. The popular meaning of the phrase 'the Letter and the Spirit.'
II. St. Paul's use of this Antithesis.
III. In which sense Augustine borrowed it.
IV. An analysis of the contents of the Treatise.
V. The influence of the Treatise on Christian Thought.

I

In popular use, the phrase 'the Letter and the Spirit' frequently represents the meaning which lies on the surface and the meaning which lies below. It is the contrast between the verbal expression and the inner intention in the writer's mind.

Thus the letter of the law is contrasted with its spirit. The former can be kept while the latter is broken. Indeed the letter can be urged to frustrate the spirit. The letter of a Scripture text may be broken while its spirit is observed. The letter is the outward form, the spirit is the inward reality. The external observance of a religious rite is described as the letter, while the personal surrender of the heart is called the spirit.

Explained in this sense, as representing the distinction between the outward and the inner meaning, the phrase 'the Letter and the Spirit' when applied to Scripture becomes a method of interpretation.

Thus we have the spiritual meaning of a text contrasted with the literal. There is no abler exponent of this distinction than Origen.[1] Origen insisted that many a Scripture text if taken in its literal meaning could only be misleading. When Isaiah[2] foretold a time when 'the wolf shall dwell with the lamb' and 'the lion shall eat straw like the ox;' or when God is represented as exclaiming 'it repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be King;'[3] or when the question is asked 'shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it;'[4] these and many similar passages must not be taken according to the letter, but according to the spirit: that is to say with a figurative meaning. Origen held that unedifying incidents in Old Testament history are to be interpreted simply as symbols of some sacred mystery.

The same symbolical interpretation was to be applied to the New Testament also. The inner sense, the Divine meaning, is to be elicited by those who possess the mind of Christ. The literal historical interpretation might suffice for those who could advance no further, but the spiritual meaning lies beyond. And 'we speak wisdom among them that are perfect.' This is the really religious and edifying use. We must go beyond the historical and literal Scripture into the very soul and Spirit of Scripture. Origen appeals to S. Paul's allegorical use of Old Testament incidents. They are 'shadows of heavenly things.'[5] Origen further held that passages of Scripture which are incredible in their literal meaning

[1] Origen, *De Principiis*, Bk. iv, cc. 8–20. [2] Isa. xi. 6.
[3] 1 Sam. xv. 11. [4] Amos iii. 6. [5] Heb. viii. 5.

were providentially inserted with the express purpose of leading the readers to a spiritual interpretation.

Thus the story of the days of the Creation, and the Almighty walking in the Garden of Eden, or the high mountain where the Tempter displayed to Christ the Kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, are not literal but figurative, mystical, allegorical. We must understand them according to the spirit and not according to the letter. Thus also there are New Testament precepts (such as 'Salute no man by the way,' or the order not to put on two coats) which also are to be spiritually understood. We are intended to go beyond the letter.

Origen was of course far too acute not to realize the dangerous extremes to which this distinction between the letter and the spirit might be pressed. He warned his readers not to imagine that no precept of Scripture was to be literally understood, or that Scripture was not based on solid facts, or that the Commandments of Christ were not to be taken according to the letter. But nevertheless he laid such stress on the spirit as opposed to the letter that he encouraged a method of exegesis in which the letter tended to disappear.

This contrast between the letter and the spirit, between the external sense and the inner meaning, so profoundly characteristic of the Alexandrian School, was adopted from Origen by S. Ambrose, and was powerfully *commended* to Augustine in sermons preached in the Cathedral at Milan.[1]

[1] Cf. *Confessions*, vi. 4.

The allegorical method of interpretation appealed strongly to Augustine, at the time when he heard Ambrose preach, because it provided him with an escape from various intellectual difficulties which the literal meaning of Scripture appeared to set in his way. Consequently he came to revel in this method. At a later period he employed it with greater caution, because he realized the enormous danger to religion caused by substituting allegory for fact. He gave emphatic warning on the subject in a passage in one of his popular sermons which stands in striking contrast with Ambrose's expositions. He told his people, above all things, in the name of the Lord, to regard the Scripture narrative as actual fact 'ne subtracto fundamento rei gestae quasi in aere quaeratis aedificare.'[1]

This then is the popular sense of the phrase 'the Letter and the Spirit.' It is the contrast between the form and the substance, the *transitory* and the permanent, the accidental and the essential in religion. We have spent some time in explaining this because this is exactly what Augustine did not mean when he wrote the Treatise on 'the Spirit and the Letter'. He acknowledged indeed that the phrase is capable of being understood in this sense.

But the meaning which he intended is very widely different. And this popular use of the terms must be entirely dismissed if we are to grasp S. Augustine's teaching in the Treatise before us.[2]

[1] Cf. Bindemann, i. 207*n*. [2] *De Sp. et. lit.* § 6.

II

The title of Augustine's Treatise, 'the Spirit and the Letter,' is derived from S. Paul's words in 2 Cor. iii. 6 'not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a New Covenant; not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.'

Now what S. Paul meant by the letter is, as S. John Chrysostom[1] explains, the Law: that is to say, the Jewish Law, the regulations of the Old Covenant. The letter is not the ceremonial law as distinguished from the moral law.

For when S. Paul selects a command of the Law as an illustration, what he selects is the command 'thou shalt not covet.' This is not ceremonial law; it is moral. For the same reason, the Law which S. Paul intends is not Jewish Law as contrasted with Christian. For the command 'thou shalt not covet' belongs to the Christian Covenant as much as it does to the Jewish.

Now it is the essential nature of *all* law that it is a direction imposed upon the human will from without. It gives instruction as to human duty. It is intrinsically excellent. S. Paul says in Rom. vii. 14

[1] *In loc.* Gaume's Edition, x. 556.

'we know that the law is spiritual.' 'Certainly' adds Chrysostom, 'it is spiritual. But it by no means imparts the Spirit.' Thus the letter conveys knowledge. It gives instruction in moral and religious ideals. But it does not impart the ability to perform. And the consequence of this failure to secure achievement of what it enjoins is that the Law or letter 'kills'. S. Paul means by this not physical death, but moral condemnation. The Law pronounces adverse judgment on the offender who has disobeyed it.

Such is S. Paul's teaching about the Law or the letter. What then does he mean by the Spirit? By the Spirit he means the Holy Spirit, imparting grace to the human soul. When he says that the spirit 'giveth life,' what he means is that the living personal Spirit of God, acting upon the soul within, enables the human will to obey what the letter enjoins from without. And this influence of grace within the human personality creates in men the love of what is right; and accordingly induces a desire to fulfil the moral ideal which has been revealed. Thus the Spirit giveth life, life in the highest of all senses, the union of the soul with the source from whom all religious life proceeds.

This is S. Paul's contrast between the Letter and the Spirit. It is not in the least the contrast between the literal meaning of a precept and its higher sense. We are in an entirely different realm of religious conceptions. The letter is not the superficial meaning of a command. The spirit is not the highest interpretation which can be placed upon that command. For it is not true that the superficial meaning kills or

condemns, while by contrast the highest interpretation giveth life or unites with God. The very contrary to this is in fact the case. If the literal meaning of a moral law condemns mankind because they disobey it, still more effectively and certainly will the spiritual meaning of that law condemn them. The higher you raise the moral ideal, the more you refine it and spiritualize it, the more certainly and effectively it pronounces condemnation on our human inability to fulfil it. If the Jewish Law taken according to the letter condemns, still more does it condemn when taken according to the spiritual meaning given in the Sermon on the Mount.

Accordingly S. Paul is here contrasting the fundamental distinction between the Jewish and the Christian religion. The Old Covenant was essentially a system of moral and religious ideals and regulations. The New Covenant is totally contrasted with this. Not because it gives no moral instruction and religious ideals: it does; but because it introduces the power of the Holy Spirit, influencing the human heart within. The New Covenant is essentially a Covenant of power, of grace, of imparted strength; a Covenant of the Spirit. The two Covenants represent two contrasted principles. The Mosaic Covenant is essentially Law and letter and instruction from without. The Christian Covenant is essentially the lifegiving power of the Holy Spirit working upon the soul within.[1]

[1] Cf. B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology of N.T.*, i. 483. 1882; cf. Meyer *in loc.*

That this is the real meaning of S. Paul the whole context of 2 Cor. iii. 6 makes clear.

And when the Apostle writes in Rom. vii. 6.

'But now we have been discharged from the Law, having died to that wherein we were holden: so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter,' his meaning is substantially the same. For he goes on to acknowledge that the Law is spiritual and yet to complain that the Law condemns. The reason being that although the Law is spiritual it does not confer the Spirit. Thus the contrast is precisely the same as in the previous passage to the Corinthians. 'The oldness of the letter' is a system of instruction by moral ideals from without. 'The Newness of the Spirit' is the quickening vitality of the Holy Spirit operating on the human soul within.[1]

This interpretation of S. Paul on the Letter and the Spirit seems generally confirmed by expositors.

Meyer[2] goes so far as to say that Origen's theory that the letter and the spirit represent respectively the literal and the mystical meaning has nothing more than an historical interest. And certainly Origen's antithesis is no exposition of S. Paul. The letter 'is with S. Paul always the Law of Moses, as a written code, while spirit is the operation of the Holy Spirit characteristic of Christianity.'[3]

[1] Cf. Liddon, *Analysis of Romans*, p. 119.
[2] Comm. on 2 Cor. (1870), p. 71.
[3] Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 176.

III

Now when Augustine adopted this Pauline antithesis, 'the Spirit and the Letter,' as the title of his Treatise, he adopted it in the genuine Pauline meaning.

But he had previously employed the words in a different sense. In his early Treatise on the value of faith, which was written during his priesthood about A.D. 391, he says of the Old Testament Ordinances of Sacrifices and Sabbath that nothing is more dangerous than to interpret them according to the letter, and nothing more healthful than to understand them according to the spirit. And for this assertion he appeals to the text 'the Letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life.' But when some nineteen years later he wrote, in 412, the Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter, he says that the passage 'the Letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life' is not merely to be understood as contrasting the literal with the spiritual meaning of a text. There is another and a more important interpretation. The letter represents moral instruction: the spirit is the Holy Spirit at work within the soul.

This interpretation represents Augustine's mature judgment, which he confirmed in his final revision of his writings in 428. At the very close of his life he criticized his own earlier exposition and remarks that, while it yields a sense which is not to be despised, yet

when S. Paul's words are considered in relation to the context and the subject with which he was dealing, the exposition given in the Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter is obviously the appropriate one.[1]

This Treatise then on the Spirit and the Letter is an exposition of the Christian doctrine concerning Grace, and the bearing of Grace on the various departments of Christian truth and Christian experience. It is beyond question one of Augustine's very best. It was written just at the period when his thought was most mature, and when controversy had not yet led him into the pronounced Predestinarian extremes of his later works. It was written in the year 412. Some eighteen years were still to run before the great theologian's labours closed. This freedom from rigid and uncompromising Predestinarian assertions makes the Treatise one of the best adapted for modern study on the Doctrine of Grace.

It was written at the request of his friend, the distinguished government official Marcellinus, a man of high character and keen religious interests, who co-operated eagerly with Augustine to promote Reunion in Africa, presided over the notorious conference of 410, and paid with his life the penalty for his intervention in ecclesiastical disputes.

Marcellinus was at this period anxious to obtain instruction on the doctrine of Grace. For a novel theory had arisen. It was being asserted in certain Christian circles, in Africa and elsewhere, that human perfection is attainable without the assistance of

[1] *Retract*, Bk. i, ch. xiv.

God's grace. This was the fundamental proposition in the Pelagian religion.

As is the case in so many disputes, the discussion was complicated by absence of definition. It was difficult for the Pelagian to reject the term 'Grace.' A term so deeply rooted in Scriptural teaching could not easily be discarded.

Nor had the Pelagian any desire to change the Christian terminology. But he used the term without defining it And he employed it in one sense while his opponents employed it in another.

Now the term 'Grace' may represent two very different ideas.

(1) It may represent the natural endowments of our mental constitution, intellect, affections and will, including all instruction in doctrine, in morals, and in good example.

And this is what Pelagius meant. Whether from diplomatic cautiousness or from vagueness of thought, he left the language undefined, what he meant by Grace was always something in the region of the natural.

(2) But 'Grace' may represent the supernatural operation of God's Spirit on the innermost personality of his creatures. It is not the imparting instruction from without, but the awakening of the affections and the strengthening of the will within.

Augustine employs the term 'Grace' in this second meaning. Grace, he says elsewhere, is not Nature. It is that whereby Nature is saved. It is not the assistance given to Nature by imparting doctrine, or by any other visible and external means. It is not

like water poured upon the plant from without. It is the secret working of Divine benevolence upon the soul within.[1]

Accordingly all through this present Treatise a sharp distinction is maintained between the outward and the inward in personal religion. Knowledge of what is right is set over against love of what is right. The intellectual awareness of an ideal is opposed to whole-hearted self-surrender to that ideal. The two words *forinsecus* and *intrinsecus* are thoroughly characteristic of the entire work. Instruction given from without is contrasted with control over the heart within. As Augustine says elsewhere, the sound of the words may fall upon the ear, but the real Teacher is within the listener's soul. And unless the real teacher is there, all outward instruction will be valueless. So Augustine understood Unction from the Holy One to mean the indwelling of the illuminating Holy Spirit within the heart.[2]

What Augustine feels intensely is that the Pelagian theory of Grace is mere intellectualism, which fails to appreciate man's moral feebleness. As he expresses it elsewhere, 'it does not follow by any means that the man who has the gift of knowledge whereby he has discovered what he ought to do, has also the Grace of love by which to do it.'[3] The real distinction between knowing and doing, painfully self-evident though it is in mortal experience, was strangely overlooked in the Pelagian psychology.

[1] Cf. Ep. 177, § 7.
[2] Tract iii, in Ep. S. Jn., § 13, p. 2515.
[3] *On the Grace of Christ*, § 36.

Pelagius analysed our spiritual nature into capacity, will, and realization. The capacity was the natural endowment. The will was the moral consent. The realization was the action which results. Of these three he ascribed the first only to God, while the second and the third proceed entirely from ourselves.[1] Augustine on the contrary maintained that God co-operates with man's will and with man's achievements. For this doctrine he appealed to the text 'it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.'[2]

[1] *On the Grace of Christ*, § 46. [2] Phil. ii. 13.

IV

It is not possible to give a systematic analysis of the Treatise, for the great writer does not appear to have framed it on any definite logical plan. Rather he writes out of the exuberance of thought, and is led on to further considerations, not so much because they flow as consequences on what he has written, but because his mind is full to overflowing. Hence there are numerous repetitions. Ideas are begun, relinquished, and resumed elsewhere. He is led to stray in various tempting directions; pulls himself up again in the consciousness that he is wandering far afield, and returns to something further which requires to be emphasized. This style of composition makes analysis difficult.

Nevertheless there are certain main ideas which become prominent as the work proceeds. It is therefore possible to divide the book into certain more or less obvious divisions, of which the following may be suggested as the chief:—

Division 1

To the Pelagian proposition Augustine opposes 'the Christian Doctrine of Grace' (§§ 4–8).

Augustine contends that while the natural endowments of man in mind and will are the indispensable pre-suppositions of moral excellence, they are insufficient of themselves to make men good. Obviously,

freewill is insufficient to enable a man to avoid sin and to do right, unless there is also added a knowledge of what is right. So far of course the Pelagian would agree.

Therefore to the natural abilities there must be added instruction in moral ideals. But, adds Augustine, instruction is insufficient to secure goodness. For instruction only gives a man information. It does not make him love. Of course instruction in the moral ideals is indispensable. We must know before we can do. But to know is one thing and to love is another. And unless a man delights in what he knows to be right and loves it, he will not yield himself to its obedience. Now this love of God (i.e. love towards God) is shed into our hearts not by our own freewill but by the Holy Spirit which is given us (Rom. v. 5).

And here Augustine introduces and interprets the text which gives the title to this Treatise:

'the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life' (2 Cor. iii. 6). This is not to be understood merely as a distinction between a literal and a figurative interpretation. The 'letter' denotes the moral ideal. The 'Spirit' is the Holy Spirit of God. As an example of the way in which the letter or Commandment killeth, Augustine following S. Paul, quotes the words, 'Thou shalt not covet.' This is no figurative expression. It is to be interpreted literally. But this command is 'the letter which killeth;' simply because, unless the Holy Spirit enables us to obey, the prohibition increases desire. For, says Augustine, I know not how it is but an object of

desire becomes more seductive when it is forbidden (§ 6).

Hence then the necessity of Grace: that is, of moral power, divinely imparted, to kindle the affections, to enable us to love and delight in, and thereby to achieve, what we recognize to be our duty.

That is to say that human excellence is the product of co-operation between God and man (§ 7).

The letter of moral instruction, if it exists in the absence of the Holy Spirit's aid, kills because it makes sin known rather than avoided, and increased rather than diminished (§ 8). For what is now added is the consciousness of having actually transgressed our duty.

Division 2

The Bearing of this Doctrine of Grace on human self-sufficiency (§§ 9–20).

The Christian doctrine, then, is that Grace is the remedy for human inability to fulfil the moral ideal. What had to be brought home to man was the consciousness of his moral weakness. This consciousness was created by the moral ideal which he knew but could not fulfil. And this consciousness of weakness should drive him to take refuge in the treasures of the Divine mercy: that is, in Grace (§ 9).

This is the teaching of S. Paul in his doctrine of the power of Christ. See, for example, Rom. vi. 3–10 (§ 10).

This Apostolic Christianity, this conception that grace precedes good works [that God does not justify the sinner because he is already true of heart, but

in order that he may become true] is the corrective to human self-sufficiency and self-esteem. We can only be recipients of life from the Well of Life, and of light from Him from Whom all human light is derived (§ 11).

The Pelagian theory, which ascribes to self what is a gift of God's Grace, is born of our confidence in self and presents the plainest contrast to S. Paul's profound personal humility, to his earnest defence of grace (§ 12), and to his searching criticisms on Jewish self-sufficiency (§ 13). The Christian attitude is one of glorying in God; that is ascribing the glory of such moral successes as a man has to God and not to himself. Whereas the Pelagian praises God because he is human, and himself because he is righteous; ascribing his existence to God, but his goodness to himself: a distinction against which Augustine puts forth all his energies.

For Pelagianism in reality makes man the author of his own justification, not God. Pelagians, no doubt, emphatically repudiated this assertion. But none the less it is true. They protested that they acknowledged God to be the author of their justification inasmuch as He gave us the moral law, instructing us in the ideal of our conduct. But to say this is to contradict S. Paul, who expressly affirmed that by the deeds of the moral law no man was justified. It created a knowledge of sin, not a power of resistence (§ 14).

The Pelagian indeed attempted to escape all this by saying, Certainly S. Paul was right in affirming that by the law should no man be justified. For,

said the Pelagian, law merely indicates our duty. It is the will which fulfils it. Consequently a man is not justified by the law but by the free use of his will.

Augustine answers that this ascription of our justification to our own unaided abilities is a denial and rejection of the most fundamental Christian principles. Moral excellence is not the independent work of man: it is a Divine production within us: the work of God.

The Pelagian contradicts the facts when he speaks of being justified by our own freewill. For, as a matter of fact, we have all sinned and come short of the Glory of God. Consequently we are not justified by our own freewill, but 'freely by God's Grace' (§ 15).

So then Divine Grace is the cause of human excellence: not the mere reward of human excellence (§ 16).

Augustine proceeds to *contrast the effect of the Pelagian and the Catholic conceptions of Grace* upon human self-esteem and on the feeling of *gratitude* to God. Quoting S. Paul's question, 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith' (Rom. iii. 27). Augustine shows that pride and self-esteem are encouraged by the theory which regards human excellence as due to a man's unaided effort. Whereas any such tendency is absolutely excluded and expelled by the Catholic doctrine which insists that a man has no virtue whatever which he did not receive as a gift from God (§ 17).

And the natural result of regarding self as the

author of a man's goodness is *ingratitude* to God who is in reality the giver of any excellence men may possess. Hence Pelagianism is destructive to genuine Christian worship. For gratitude is essential to worship. Augustine quotes from the *Sursum Corda* of the Eucharist the appeal to 'give thanks unto Our Lord God.' And he urges that gratitude and thanksgiving is precisely what no man will offer aright who ascribes to himself what he has really received from God (§§ 18–19).

Thus law without grace does not produce excellence (§ 20).

Division 3

The Bearing of Grace on Law and the Contrast between the Jewish and the Christian Covenant (§§ 21–42)

Here then Augustine proceeds to draw out the *difference between the principle of works* (lex factorum, lex operum) *and the principle of faith* (lex fidei). See Romans iii. 20–27 where these opposing principles are propounded.

It will not do to say that the principle of works exists in Judaism because it orders exceptional observance, and the principle of faith in Christianity because it abolishes them. The distinction is immeasurably deeper. The moral command 'thou shalt not covet' belongs to the principle of works. And this command is as evangelical and apostolical as it is Judaical, Christianity includes the principle of works as well as Judaism. Even with regard to externals, the form may be altered, but the use of externals remains (§ 21).

Wherein then does the difference between these two principles of works and of faith consist? Augustine replies that the former principle commands and the latter enables. The principle of works is the moral Law, instructing us what we are to do. The principle of faith is the appeal to the Divine Grace, which enables us to fulfil what the moral Law commands.[1]

In the principle of works God says to man, Do what I command: in the principle of faith man says to God, Give grace to do what Thou commandest.

Thus the moral Law issues commands in order to warn us what our faith should do: That is to say, to Whom we must appeal for power, if we are as yet unable to obey. And in any case we must realize to Whom we are indebted for the grace enabling us to obey. The grave defect of the Pelagian is that he seeks to establish his own righteousness, and fails to realize that righteousness is a gift from God. Hence, says Augustine (again most characteristically) the man who knows whence he may hope to obtain a goodness which as yet he does not possess is far more a son of faith than the man who ascribes to his own exertions any goodness he may possess. And better than either is the man who both possesses goodness and knows from Whom he has derived it: so long at least as he does not fall into the Pharisaic delusion of imagining himself to require no further grace.

[1] Quod operum lex minando imperat, hoc fidei lex credendo impetrat. § 22.

Accordingly the conclusion is that human acceptability before God does not come from the principle of works but from the principle of faith: not from the letter but from the Spirit; not from the merits of our actions but from the gratuitous Grace of God (§ 22).

We must therefore be careful not to imagine that the Law or principle of works denotes mere external Jewish observances. It *denotes the whole of the Decalogue*, which, says Augustine, with the one exception of the Sabbath, is an obligation for the Christian. The whole of the moral Law is the letter which killeth, unless grace is given (§ 23).

Thus S. Paul does not hesitate to call the Decalogue a ministration of condemnation and a ministration of death (2 Cor. iii. 2–9).

The reason for this is that, in spite of the intrinsic excellence of the moral ideal, 'the Law worketh wrath' Rom. iv. 15.

It does not enable. It provokes opposition and increases the knowledge of sin. It condemns and kills (§ 24).

It would be ridiculous, says Augustine, to apply this exclusively to the Law about the Sabbath. It is obvious from experience that the letter, or precept prohibiting sin, does not impart the principle of life-giving power. It increases desire. It accumulates transgression. Nothing but liberating grace can enable realization of the moral ideal. We must have love infused into the heart by the Holy Spirit if we are to fulfil God's will. And here Augustine quotes the great passage from Romans vii. 6–25

where S. Paul contrasts the newness of the Spirit with the oldness of the letter, and insists on the ineffectiveness of all moral ideals to win the love of the natural man. Nothing could liberate from the body of this moral death except the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (§ 25).

Without that Grace moral enlightenment is unavailing. I acknowledge the beauty of the ideal but I do not obey it. The consequence is that 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow': not through any fault of the moral Law, but through his own infirmity, in the absence of the grace of the Holy Spirit. No act is good unless it is the product of love. And love is a gift of the Spirit (§ 26).

This Doctrine of Grace is *the peculiar distinction of Christianity*. It lay concealed in the Older Covenant. It is revealed in the New (§ 27).

For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. By the Spirit we are enabled to delight in goodness, whereas the natural man takes pleasure in sin (§ 28).

Thus *the difference between the two principles of instruction and of Grace* may be described by saying that the former is *external* and the latter is *within* (§ 29).[1]

The moral ideal is external to us, with its formidable threatenings. The Grace of the Spirit is the inward operation of the Spirit of love upon the heart. The one 'forinsecus terrificat.' The other 'intrinsecus justificat' (§ 30).

[1] Lex extrinsecus posita est, qua injusti terrerentur: hic intrinsicus data est, qua justificarentur.

Thus while the moral Law is a ministration of condemnation and a ministration of death, the Grace of Christ is a ministration of the Spirit and a ministration of righteousness (§ 31).

Here then is the essence of the Christian religion on the subject of reconciliation of man with God. We are not accepted for our own acquirements, but for what the Grace of God effects within us. And without that Grace acceptance is impossible (§ 32).

Repeating the idea very briefly: Law is given in order that Grace may be sought: Grace is given in order that Law may be fulfilled (§ 34).

Or once again, at somewhat greater length, yet quite concisely, the whole idea is summed up by saying that the Old Covenant is contrasted with the New in this respect; that the one is a Law written in tables, the other a Law written in the heart; that the one is an external warning and the other an inward delight; that the one is the letter which kills and the other the Spirit which gives life; that God does not only aid us to do good by external precepts but by inwardly increasing our moral power; and that the distinctly Christian element consists in love which is actually imparted by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us (§ 42).

Division 4

The Bearing of this Doctrine on Pagan Virtues
(§§ 43–49)

Having shown the relation of the Religion of Grace to Judaism, Augustine proceeds to show its bearing on the Gentiles. For S. Paul speaks of the

Gentiles, or Pagan world, ' doing by nature the things contained in the Law ' (Rom. ii. 14).

This raises a difficulty with regard to the Christian doctrine concerning Grace. For Pagans are here said to obey the moral Law ' By nature '. S. Paul does not say that they do so by the Spirit of God or by grace. But if the Pagan world had the law written in its heart and obeyed it by nature, what superiority remains in being under the Dispensation of Grace ?

Augustine answers that these Pagans to whom S. Paul refers are either those who have been brought under Christian influence, or those who are still in a pre-Christian state.

1. If the former interpretation be correct, as he himself believes, then what the Gentiles do by nature is not meant as excluding Grace. The reference is to nature repaired by Grace (§ 44).

Hence S. Paul says that men are justified ' freely.'

By ' freely ' he means that works do not precede justification. If Divine acceptance of Pagans were a reward of their merit, grace would be no more grace (§ 45).

In this case the distinction between converted Gentiles and converted Jews lies in the fact that the former do not come to Christ, like the latter, through a Law and a Covenant already sent them. The distinction does not consist in the Gentile fulfilling by nature the Divine ideal in which the Jew had failed (§ 46).

When S. Paul speaks of Gentiles doing the things of the law, that is fulfilling the moral ideal, ' By nature,' where we should have expected him to say

by grace, or by the Spirit of God, there is nothing contrary in this to our first interpretation. For certainly S. Paul taught that the Spirit of Grace is the Agent in all moral good, and that He restores in man the Divine Image in which we were naturally created (§ 47).

2. If however we adopt the second interpretation of the passage, and understand S. Paul when he speaks of doing by nature the things of the Law as referring to Pagans who do not yet believe in Christ, then it must be remembered that the Divine Image is not altogether effaced in the unregenerate human being. Nature even in its unregenerate condition is not absolutely corrupt. Even the least sanctified human being does some things which harmonize with the law of God. He exhibits certain good works in a life which is not good.

It must be remembered here that Augustine has already laid it down that no action is good which is not the product of love toward God. So that he allows a certain moral excellence to conduct which, judged from the spiritual or religious point of view, is altogether inferior. But the Christian test of actions is their reference to God and Christ: that is, the Spirit by which they are prompted.

Judged from this lofty spiritual standpoint, it must be said that the natural man, the Pagan, possesses by nature a power within him to perceive what is right, and in certain cases to fulfil it. But this doing by nature the things of the law is a very different thing indeed from the godliness which raises the soul into the life which is blessed and eternal. Consequently

these virtues of the natural man, while they have a certain relative excellence, have no reconciling justifying and saving power. Apart from grace, human beings differ in the degree of their sinfulness.

But there is no reconciliation with God nor renewal except through the one Mediator and His gift of Grace (§ 48).

Division 5

The Relation of Grace to Redemption (§§ 50–51)

The great principle is declared by S. Paul that if righteousness comes by the law, if perfection is acquired by the independent response of our will apart from Divine support, then Christ died in vain (Gal. ii. 21). But if Christ's Death secured Redemption, and His Ascension enabled him to impart gifts to men, then Christ is the source from Whom Grace is derived. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. x. 4).

Hence the necessity of faith in Christ. For by faith we plead for Redemption. By faith we flee to the mercy of God that He may give us power to do what He orders us to do.

Division 6

The Relation of Grace to Freewill (§ 52)

Augustine is concerned to balance in right proportion the different elements of Christian doctrine. His strong insistence on the doctrine of Grace raises the problem of its relation to the human will. Accordingly he teaches that Grace does not exclude

freewill. On the contrary, Grace pre-supposes freewill. For the moral ideal cannot be obeyed without freewill. The function of Grace is to heal the maladies of a will infirm through sin. Moral freedom can only be obtained when the will is recovered from malady and weakness.

The thing which to Augustine is unintelligible, the thing which his whole religious experience contradicts, is the reliance on the power of the will to the exclusion of Grace.

Why, he asks, with an earnestness born of bitter experience, should miserable men pride themselves on their freedom before they are free? If they are sin's slaves, why boast of their freedom? If they are liberated, why boast as if they owed their freedom to themselves?

'If the Son shall make you free, then are ye free indeed' (S. John viii. 36).

Division 7

The Bearing of Grace on Faith (§§ 53–60)

Still pushing forward in this analysis of the Divine and Human elements in human progress, there is one last problem which remains. It is the problem of faith. Faith is the beginning of all spiritual development, the beginning of Salvation. The question is, Does faith lie within our power?

Here the obvious distinction must be remembered between the will and the power. We may have the will without the power, or the power without the will. We sometimes will what we cannot effect, and

sometimes can effect what we refuse to will. Power exists where the will is accompanied by the ability to carry into effect (§ 53).

That is what we mean by power. Next consider what we mean by faith. What we contemplate here is not every sort of faith. Faith is assent to the truth of what is propounded to us. Now clearly such assent is a matter of the will. It follows therefore that faith is in our power.

What sort of faith is it, then, which we mean, when we inquire whether faith is within our power? We mean faith in God. And this not of a servile character; not the product of fear, but of love. And faith of this description would not be within us, so far indeed as it is within us, unless it were imparted by the Holy Spirit (§§ 55–56).

Here then we must inquire still further. Is the will to believe a gift from God? Or is it a product of our own natural ability independent of God's special influence?

The answer appears to involve us in a dilemma. For if we say (1) that faith depends entirely on ourselves, being a consequence of our natural endowment, then the will to believe is altogether our own decision, and we are possessors of something, which we did not receive. We have a ground for self-complaisance. Augustine realizes keenly that this alternative admits the Pelagian self-congratulation, God made me human, I made myself righteous. Also at the same time it contradicts the Apostolic words 'What hast thou that thou didst no receive?' (1 Cor. iv. 7).

But conversely, if we say (2) that faith, or the will to believe, depends entirely on God, then we leave room for the sceptical to excuse their want of faith, on the plea that God has not bestowed on them the ability.

(3) And in either case why do not all men believe ? For God wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The Reply.

(i) Freewill is an intermediate power (media vis) capable either of faith or of unbelief. It is a gift which man has by nature. Thus it is certainly true that all faith is a gift of God in the sense that the will, or capacity for faith, is part of the natural endowments of mankind. (The Pelagian would of course have acknowledged this.)

Also it is unquestionable that God wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. ii. 4). Nevertheless the Divine will is not coercive. God does not will men's salvation in such a sense as to deprive them of their freedom. In other words He leaves them their responsibility of decision.

(Note that Augustine here takes a larger view of the Divine benevolence than in his later interpretation of 1 Tim. ii. 4.)

(ii) But the will to believe must not be ascribed to God solely on the ground that the will itself is a Divine endowment of human nature. It is also to be ascribed to God because He influences the decisions of the will.

(1) Not only is the will whereby we believe a gift of God, because it is part of the natural

constitution of the creature ; but also God acts upon the will by persuasive influences in order to enable men to consent and believe.

(2) Influences and suggestions are essential conditions of any act of faith. For no man can have the will to believe unless there are reasons and motives for his belief.

(3) The Divine influences upon the human will are of two kinds. Some are external : such as suggestions through the visible world, or through the Gospel Revelation, the Evangelical ideals. Others are inward : Divine influence within the reasonable soul, where no one can determine what thoughts shall arise within his mind, nor the effect which they shall produce upon him.

(4) Nevertheless the ultimate decision, whether of consent or of rejection, lies within the creature's will, and is therefore man's responsibility.

(5) Hence the Apostolic challenge is unrefuted. 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive ?' (1 Cor. iv. 7).

Faith is due to the co-operation of the creature's will with God : in which co-operation His mercy precedes our endeavours, but neither overrules nor supersedes them.

(iii) The final sentences of this section touch on the problem elsewhere avoided in the Treatise : Why is grace effective in one individual and not in another ? Could not Grace overcome repugnance in both ? Augustine here refuses to enter the discussion. Consequently we are here spared the intricacies of predestination. It is this which makes the

Treatise of peculiar practical value for modern religion. All Augustine will answer, is (1) that the ways of God are unfathomable cf. Rom. xi. 33; (2) that all His ways are just. There, Augustine leaves it, with the penetrating remark that he who is dissatisfied with this response must seek more learned advisers, but should be careful lest what he gets are only more self-confident. If this cautious utterance had been Augustine's latest word, the Church might have been spared much subsequent speculative controversy on Predestination. Christian thought would have confined itself to the fact of the practical necessity of Grace.

Here then this great Treatise concludes in a brief summary of the main outlines of the discussion (§§ 61–66).

V

The influence of this Treatise upon Christian thought has been remarkable. It is scarcely too much to say that all the principal writers on the Doctrine of Grace have derived inspiration from its pages. We find its striking sentences quoted repeatedly. It guided the expositions of S. Thomas. It was studied by Bossuet[1] in preparation for his celebrated first Whitsuntide Sermon, on 2 Cor. iii. 6 'the Letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life'. And nearly everything of value in that Sermon is reproduced from Augustine's Treatise. It was quoted by Fénelon[2] as conclusive authority in the Jansenist controversies on Grace. Its importance in Christian morals may be seen in one of the latest works on the ethics of S. Augustine, the learned volumes of Professor Mausbach.[3]

Dr. Bright[4] says of the Treatise that it is 'a book which, perhaps, next to the Confessions, tells us most of the thoughts of that rich profound and affectionate mind, on the soul's relation to its God.'

Augustine is universally acknowledged to be the greatest exponent of the Doctrine of Grace since

[1] Works, ed. 1863. Lachat. x. 285.
[2] Fénelon, *Correspondence*, 1827, iii. 228.
[3] Mausbach, *Die Ethik des h. Augustinus*, 1909, 2 vols.
[4] Introduction to Anti-Pelagian Treatises, xxi.

S. Paul. He was qualified for this high office alike by his extraordinary psychological insight and by his deep personal experience of human weakness and instability. It is said that a great preacher intending to deliver a panegyric on Augustine divided his subject into two parts: what Grace has done for Augustine, and what Augustine has done for Grace. The former aspect, however, proved to be inexhaustible, so that the second was never reached. But if any one desires to realize what Augustine has done for the doctrine of Grace, no better introduction can be found than the Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter. For here the great writer is at his very best. Those who desire to understand something of this momentous subject, above all, those whose function it is to give instruction on the doctrine of Grace, will not easily discover an exponent of S. Paul endowed with equal sympathy, power and penetration.

Few treatises of Augustine's are of greater permanent applicability to human life than this treatise. It is the doctrine of which above all others Augustine's wonderful psychological insight and personal moral experience enabled him to be the chief exponent. He is of all things the theologian of grace.

The reader may sometimes wish that the writer were not always so profuse, and that the richness of his thought had at times been more restrained. But the value of the treatise would be difficult to exaggerate. It is profoundly true to the facts of human nature, and to the Christian principles of spiritual development.

The false estimate of human capacity which he refutes is constantly reappearing; for the Pelagian is

nothing else than the natural man with all his blindness and self-sufficiency. So long as human nature remains what it is, it will always be essential to insist with all possible power as Augustine has done on the Christian doctrine of Grace.

THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER

I RECENTLY sent you, dear Son Marcellinus two studies of mine, concerning the Baptism of Infants and concerning the Perfection of Man's righteousness, in which I remarked that no one seems to have attained, or to be likely to attain, in this life, to that Perfection excepting the one Mediator, Who endured experiences of things human in the likeness of the flesh of sin, yet without any sin whatsoever. After reading these studies you replied that you were disturbed by my asserting in the latter book that exemption from sin by the help of God was possible for a man if his will did not fail, yet with the exception of the One in whom all will be made alive, no one had lived or would live in whom while here on earth this Perfection could be found. It seems to you absurd to assert the possibility of a thing of which there was no example. Although I believe you would not doubt that it has never happened that a camel has passed through a needle's eye, and yet Christ said that even this is possible with God. Also you may read that twelve thousand legions of angels could have fought for Christ to prevent His suffering, and yet it never happened. You may read that it was possible for the nations to have been exterminated once for all from the land which was given to the Children of Israel, and yet God willed that it should be done by slow degrees. Indeed a thousand things we admit were possible in the past, or are possible

in the present, and yet we are unable to produce an example of their occurrence. Accordingly we ought not to deny the possibility of a man's being without sin merely because there is no man in whom we can prove it to have been realized, excepting Him who is not only human but also by nature divine.

2. Here you may perhaps reply that the instances which I have mentioned of unrealized possibilities are works of God. But for a man to be without sin belongs to the work of the man himself. Indeed the attainment of righteousness, full and perfect and complete in every way, is man's noblest work. Therefore it is not credible that there neither was nor is nor will be any instance in this life of a man who achieved this work, if it is a work within the power of man to achieve. But you ought to consider that although this achievement belongs to the work of man, yet it is also God's gift, and therefore we must not doubt that it is also God's work. 'For it is God who worketh in you,' says the Apostle, 'both to will and to work according to His good will'.[1]

3. Furthermore those who assert that men are living, or have lived here on earth without any sin whatsoever, need not trouble us much by their opinion. Nay, they should be urged, if they can do it, to prove their opinion true. There is evidence in Scripture, conclusive as I believe, that no man living here, although using his freewill, is found to be without sin. For example: 'Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no

[1] Phil. ii. 13.

man living be justified '.[1] If any one can show that this and such like statements ought to be received in a different sense from their apparent meaning ; and if he succeeds in proving that a person or several persons have lived here on earth without any sin; we ought not merely to refrain from opposing him, but cordially to agree with him ; otherwise we show ourselves the most mean-spirited of men. In fact, even if no such person exists, or was or will be endowed with such Perfection, (as I am disposed to believe) and yet it is affirmed and maintained that such a one either is or was or will be : so far as I can judge, the error is not great, nor dangerous ; for such a thinker is only misled by the kindliness of his disposition : always provided that he who maintains this opinion does not believe that he himself is such a perfect man, without conclusive proof that he is in reality such a one indeed.

4. But the sharpest and most forcible resistance is to be offered to those who think that they can perfect righteousness, or advance towards it by persevering, by the mere force of the human will without the help of God. When pressure is brought upon them to explain how they ventured to assert that this happens without the help of God, they check themselves. They do not dare to make this assertion seeing how impious and intolerable it is. They now acknowledge that righteousness is not achieved without the help of God both because God created man and gave him a freewill ; and

[1] Ps. cxlii. 2.

because God by giving precepts instructs men how they ought to live; and because God certainly helps a man, since by teaching He takes away his ignorance, in order that man may know what action to avoid, and what he ought to seek. Thus by freewill implanted by nature, if man walks as God directs, living soberly, righteously and godly, he may deserve to attain the blessedness of eternal life.

5. Our doctrine however is that the human will is divinely aided to do righteously in such a manner that, in addition to the freedom of the will with which man was created, and in addition to the teaching whereby he is instructed how he ought to live, he receives the Holy Spirit, through Whom there is caused within his mind, even now while as yet he walks by faith and not by sight,[1] the delight and the love of that highest and unchangeable good which is God. This pledge of the free gift is bestowed on man in order that he may yearn to cleave to his Creator, and ardently approach to communion with that true light, so that he may derive his well-being from Him from Whom he derives his being. For neither does freewill avail for anything but sin if the way of truth is concealed; but also when our duty and our ideal begin to be revealed, we neither do them, nor undertake them, nor live aright, unless we delight in them and love. Now in order that they should be loved, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, not by our own freewill, which originates in us, but by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.[2]

[1] 2 Cor. v. 7. [2] Rom. v. 5.

6. For in truth the teaching by which we receive a command to live soberly and rightly is 'the Letter that killeth,' unless the 'Spirit that giveth life' be present. For the Scripture phrase, 'the Letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life,'[1] is not only to be understood to mean that any figurative expression, whose natural meaning is absurd, is not to be taken literally, but that we should feed our souls by spiritual understanding, considering the inner meaning which it represents; since 'to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace'.[2] There are, for example, many things written in the Song of Songs which if taken according to the flesh would not be productive of enlightened love but would tend to sensual desire.

The words of the Apostle therefore 'the Letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life' are not only to be understood that way, but also, and indeed chiefly, as it is spoken most plainly in another place, 'I should not have known evil desire unless the law had said thou shalt not covet.' And a little further on he says, 'sin having taken occasion by the commandment deceived me and by it slew me.'[3]

Here is the meaning of 'the Letter killeth'. And certainly, when it is said 'thou shalt not covet,' it is not something figuratively spoken, and to be received in some other than the literal meaning: it is the plainest and most wholesome commandment, which if any man fulfils he will have no sin whatsoever. For the Apostle chose this as a general

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 6. [2] Rom. viii. 6. [3] Rom. vii. 7, 11.

maxim, and included everything in it; as if this were the voice of the law prohibiting every kind of sin, when it says 'thou shalt not covet'. For there is no sin which is not committed through desire. And hence the law which gives this precept is good and worthy of praise. But when the Holy Spirit does not help, inspiring good desire in the place of evil desire, that is, shedding abroad love within our hearts, forthwith, that law, good though it be, increases by prohibition the evil desire; just as a force of water if it continue incessantly to flow into one place, becomes intensified by obstruction, and when the obstacle is overcome the accumulated mass rushes headlong down with greater violence. For somehow or other the very object of our desire becomes more attractive by being forbidden. And this is what the passage means, 'sin deceives by the commandment and by it slays'. For wilful disobedience is now added, which is unknown where there is no law.

7. But let us consider, if you please, the whole passage in the Apostle's letter, and discuss it as the Lord shall enable us. For I want to show if I can that the Apostolic saying, 'the Letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life,' is not spoken concerning figurative expressions, although there also it can be made to apply, but rather concerning the law which openly forbids what is evil. And when I have shown the truth of this, it will at once become clearer that to live aright is a gift of God. And this is the case not only because God endowed man with freewill, without which neither a good nor bad life is possible; nor only because He gave commandments to instruct us

how we ought to live, but because He sheds abroad love through the Holy Spirit into the hearts of those whom He foreknew in order to foreordain, foreordained in order to call, called in order to justify, justified in order to glorify.[1] And when the truth of this shall become quite plain, you will see, I imagine, that it is futile to urge that the only things that are possible although unexampled are the works of God. [Such works like that already mentioned, as the passage of a camel through a needle's eye, and whatever else may be impossible with us but easy with God : and that therefore human righteousness is not to be classified among these things because it is the work of man not of God] ; and so there is no reason why the perfection of human righteousness should be thought to be unexampled, if it is possible in this life.

The futility of this statement will be sufficiently obvious when it becomes clear that human righteousness also is to be attributed to the action of God, although not without the co-operation of the human will. We cannot therefore deny the possibility of perfection in the present life, since with God all things are possible, both those which He achieves by His own will alone, and those which He appoints to be wrought by Himself with co-operation of the will of His creatures. Whatsoever therefore among these possibilities He does not actualize is indeed without example among actual things ; yet has the ground of its possibility with God in His power, and the reason

[1] Rom. viii. 29–30.

why it is not actualized in His wisdom. And even if the ground of this is concealed from men, let them not forget that they are human, nor let them ascribe unwisdom to God for the very reason that they do not fully understand His wisdom.

8. Hear then the Apostle in his epistle to the Romans explaining and plainly showing that what He wrote to the Corinthians, 'the Letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life,' is rather to be received in the sense which we have already given: namely, that the letter of the law, which teaches that we must not sin, kills, if the life-giving Spirit is not present. For it causes sin to be known rather than to be avoided, and therefore to be increased rather than diminished, because disobedience to the law is now added to evil desire.

9. Accordingly the Apostle's intention is to extol the grace which comes upon all nations through Jesus Christ, so that the Jews should not boast their superiority to the other nations on the ground that they have received the Law. After declaring that sin and death entered the human race through one man, and through one man righteousness and life eternal (meaning, clearly, Adam in the one case, and Christ in the other) he says, 'moreover the law came in beside that the trespass might abound; but where trespass abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned unto death, even so may grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' [1] Then he puts

[1] Rom. v. 20-21.

to himself the question, 'What then shall we say'? 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.'[1] For he realizes that perverse minds might perversely construe his assertion that 'the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound; but where the trespass abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly', as if he had said that sin was beneficial as causing abundance of grace. Refuting this, he answers, 'God forbid': and adds, 'We who died to sin, how shall we live therein?'[2] That is to say, since grace caused us to die to sin, if we live to sin, what else are we doing than manifesting ingratitude to grace? To commend the effectiveness of a remedy is not to represent as beneficial the diseases and wounds which that remedy removes. The greater the praise bestowed upon the remedy the greater the blame and the loathing of the wounds and diseases from which the thing commended sets men free. In precisely the same way the praise and preaching of grace is the blame and the condemnation of trespasses. What had to be brought home to man was the foulness of his weakness. Against his iniquity the good and holy law was no avail. His sinfulness was thereby intensified rather than diminished. Law indeed came in besides that trespass might abound, in order that, being thereby convicted and ashamed, he might realize that what he required was not so much God as a teacher, but God as a helper, by Whom his steps might be directed, lest all evil should have dominion over him. And so by taking refuge in the help of

[1] Rom. vi. 1. [2] Rom. vi. 2.

divine mercy, he might be healed. Thus where trespass abounded grace might more exceedingly abound, not through the merits of the sinner, but through the help of Him Who came to his aid.

10. Next the Apostle shows that the same remedy is mystically revealed in the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. 'Do ye not know that so many of us as were baptized in Jesus Christ, were baptized in His death? We were buried with Him therefore by Baptism into death, that like as Christ rose [1] from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, so shall we be also in that of His Resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified together, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is justified from sin. But if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live together with Him. Knowing that Christ rising from the dead dieth no more, and death shall have no more dominion over Him. For in that He died unto sin, He died once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. So do ye also reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin, but to live unto God in Christ Jesus'.[2]

It is quite clear that by the figure of the Lord's death and Resurrection is signified the setting of our old life and the rising of the new, and that here is shown the abolishing of iniquity and the renewal of

[1] Surrexit, A. V. and R. V. 'was raised'.
[2] Rom. v. 20; vi. 11.

righteousness. Whence then comes so great a benefit to man through the letter of the law except it be through faith in Jesus Christ?

11. This sacred reflection preserves the sons of men, living in hope under the protection of the divine wings, that they may be abundantly satisfied with the plenteousness of His house, and drink of the full stream of His pleasure. For with Him is the well of life, and in His light shall we see light, Who extends His mercy to them that know Him, and His righteousness unto them who are true of heart.[1] He does not extend His mercy because they know Him, but in order that they may know Him. Nor does He extend His righteousness whereby He justifies the ungodly because they are true of heart, but in order that they may become true. This reflection does not issue in self-esteem. That fault arises when each man trusts in himself, and takes himself to be the source of his life.

By so doing man withdraws from that well of life, whence alone righteousness [that is, a holy life] can be derived; withdraws himself from that unchanging light by sharing in which the rational soul is in a manner kindled, and itself becomes a created light: just as John was 'a burning and a shining light',[2] while nevertheless he acknowledged the source from which his light was derived, when he said, 'of His fulness have we received'.[3] *Whose* fulness, if not His compared with Whom John was not light at all? For 'that was the true light which lighteth every man

[1] Ps. xxxvi. 8. [2] S. John v. 35. [3] S. John i. 16.

that cometh into this world'.[1] Moreover the Psalm which says 'Extend Thy mercy to them that know Thee, and Thy righteousness unto them that are true of heart, " goes on to say " let not the foot of pride come to me, and let not the hand of sinners move me; there are they fallen, all who work iniquity; they are driven out, they were not able to stand'.[2] By this ungodliness whereby each ascribes to himself what is of God, he is driven into his own darkness, namely the works of iniquity. For these works are clearly man's own, for their achievement he is competent. But works of righteousness he does not perform, except so far as he receives from that well and that light, where is the life which lacks nothing, and where there is no variableness neither shadow of turning.

12. Wherefore the Apostle, who, being originally named Saul, selected the name Paul for no other reason, as it seems to me, except to show himself little, and as the least of the Apostles, strove with such force and severity in praise of this Grace of God against the proud and arrogant and those who presumed upon their own works. For assuredly this grace was most conclusively and manifestly displayed in the man who though he violently persecuted the Church of God, and did such acts as merited the severest punishment, yet obtained mercy instead of condemnation, and received grace instead of penalty. Rightly indeed does he cry aloud and strive in the behalf of grace, indifferent to the hostility of those who fail to understand a matter so deep and so

[1] S. John i. 9. [2] Ps. xxxv. 8–13.

abstruse, and who distort his sound utterances and pervert his meaning. Meanwhile he incessantly proclaims the gift of God, whereby alone the sons of the promise, the sons of the divine benefits, the sons of grace and mercy, the sons of the new Covenant, are saved. In the first place every salutation of his runs as follows: 'Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ'.

Secondly the Epistle to the Romans is almost entirely concerned with this question alone. And he discusses it so persistently, and with such complexity as to weary the reader's attention, although it is a beneficial and wholesome wearying, calculated rather to brace the faculties of the inner man rather than to injure them.

13. Thence come the words which I quoted above. Thence comes his rebuke of the Jew when he says that although he is called a Jew, yet he by no means fulfils his profession. 'But if,' says he, 'thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and gloriest in God, and knowest His will, and examinest things which differ, being instructed out of the law, and art confident that thou thyself art a leader of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having in the law the form of knowledge and of truth: Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou who preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou who gloriest in the law, through

transgression of the law dost thou dishonour God? For the name of God is blasphemed through you among the Gentiles, as it is written. For circumcision indeed profiteth if thou keep the law: but if thou art a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. If therefore uncircumcision keep the ordinances of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, when it keeps the law, judge thee who by the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God'.[1]

Here the Apostle explains what he means by the words about glorying in God. For indeed if such a Jew truly gloried in God, in such a manner as is required by grace, which is conferred as a gift and not according to the merits of our actions, his praise would have been of God and not of men. But the Jewish manner of glorying in God was as if they were the only people who deserved to receive His law: as the Psalmist says, 'He hath not done so to any nation, neither has He revealed his judgment unto them'.[2] This Law the Jews supposed themselves to fulfil by their own righteousness, when they were rather its transgressors. And so the Law was working wrath against them, for sin abounded, being committed by men who knew the Law.

[1] Rom. ii. 17–29. [2] Ps. cxlvii. 20.

And they too who did what the law commanded acted without the aid of the Spirit of Grace, from fear of punishment, not through love of righteousness. Consequently in the sight of God there did not exist in the will that goodness which in the sight of men appeared in the work. Nay rather they were held thereby condemned, because God knew that they would prefer to sin if they could do it with impunity. But what the Apostle calls the circumcision of the heart, represents a will free from all unlawful desire. And this is not created by the letter which teaches and threatens, but by the Spirit who helps and heals. Accordingly the praise of such persons is not of men but of God, for God by His grace furnishes them with that which merits praise. And of God it is said 'In the Lord shall my soul be praised;'[1] and to God it is said, 'my praise is of Thee'.[2] They are not like those who would have God praised because they are men, but themselves because they are righteous.

14. But, say they,[3] we praise God also as the author of our justification, inasmuch as He gave the Law, by the study of which we know how we ought to live. But they do not understand the passage they read: 'by the Law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God'. They may be justified in the sight of men, but not in His sight who discerns the heart and the inmost will, wherein He sees what a man does through fear of the law, and what he would prefer to do if it were permitted him. And lest anyone should suppose that when the Apostle says, by the Law

[1] Ps. xxxiii. 3. [2] Ps. xxi. 26. [3] i. e. the Pelagians.

shall no man be justified, he was referring to the symbolical precepts of the ancient sacraments, such as circumcision in the flesh which infants were ordered to receive on the eighth day, he immediately adds what law he means, and says ' by the Law is the knowledge of sin '. That then is the law concerning which he afterwards observes, ' I had not known sin but by the Law. For I had not known covetousness unless the Law had said thou shalt not covet '.[1] For what else is meant by the words ' for by the law is the knowledge of sin ' ?

15. At this point it may be that human arrogance, unacquainted with the righteousness of God, and endeavouring to establish its own, will urge that the Apostle was correct in teaching that no man is justified by the law, since the law only indicates what is to be done or avoided, its purpose being to inform the will; whereas man is justified, not by the directions of the law, but by the action of his own freewill.

But give attention to what follows. He says, ' But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets '.[2] Surely the deaf might hear that. He says ' The righteousness of God hath been manifested.' This is what those who would establish their own righteousness do not understand. To this they are unwilling to submit. He says ' The righteousness of God hath been manifested ' : he does not say the righteousness of man, or the righteousness of

[1] Rom. vii. 7. [2] Rom. iii. 21.

man's own will, but the righteousness of God; not that whereby God is righteous, but that in which he clothes man when he justifies the ungodly. This is witnessed by the Law and the Prophets: to this the Law and the Prophets bear evidence. The Law, in the fact that it commands and threatens but justifies no man, plainly shows that man is justified by the gift of God through the aid of the Spirit: the Prophets show the same, because Christ fulfilled at His coming what they had predicted. Now this is the reason why the following words are joined on, 'the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ,' that is, through the faith whereby we believe in Christ. Now just as this faith of Christ does not mean the faith by which Christ believes, so also this righteousness of God does not mean that by which God is righteous. Both of them are qualities of man. But they are called of God and of Christ because by His generosity they are bestowed on us. Thus the righteousness of God without the Law is not manifested without the Law. For how can it be witnessed by the Law if it were manifested without the Law? But the righteousness of God without the Law is that which God bestows on the believer through the Spirit of grace without the aid of the Law; that is to say, unassisted by the Law. Indeed through the Law God shows to a man his weakness, in order that taking refuge by faith in His mercy he may be healed. Concerning God's wisdom it is said 'it carries the Law and Mercy on its tongue:'[1] that

[1] Prov. iii. 16.

is to say the law whereby He causes the proud to be condemned; but the mercy whereby He justifies the humbled. Therefore 'the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is unto all them that believe: for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God',[1] and not of their own glory. For what have they that they have not received? But if they have received it, why do they glory as if they had not received it?[2]

They have fallen short, therefore, of the glory of God. And note what follows: 'being justified freely through His grace'.[3] They are not therefore justified by the law, nor justified by their own will, but justified freely by His grace: not because it happens without our will, but the weakness of our will is shown by the Law, in order that grace may heal our will; and the will being healed may fulfil the Law, being neither placed under the Law nor destitute of the Law.

16. Now 'Law is not designed for a righteous person,'[4] 'but it is good if a man use it lawfully.'[5] When the Apostle associates these two apparent contraries, he warns and urges the reader to investigate the problem and to solve it. For how is 'the Law good if a man use it lawfully,' if the following statement is also true, 'knowing this, that Law is not made for a righteous man'? For who does use the Law lawfully except a righteous man? Yet it is not made for him but for the unrighteous. Or is the unrighteous man to use the Law lawfully in order that he may be justified, since it is as a teacher leading him to

[1] Rom. iii. 22. [2] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [3] Rom. iii. 20-24.
[4] 1 Tim. i. 9. [5] 1 Tim. i. 8.

grace, through which alone it is possible to fulfil what the Law commands? Through it he is justified freely, that is without any previous merits in his own actions, 'otherwise grace would not be grace.'[1] For grace is given, not because we have done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them: that is, not because we have fulfilled the Law, but in order that we may be able to fulfil it.

For He Himself has said, 'I came not to destroy the Law but to fulfil it': He of whom it is said 'We beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'[2] This is the glory of which it is said 'all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.' And this is the grace of which he goes on to say 'being justified freely by His grace.' The unrighteous person therefore uses the Law lawfully in order that he may become righteous; and when that is achieved let him no longer use the Law as a means of arrival when he has arrived, or rather, to adopt the Apostle's previously quoted illustration, as a teacher when he has become learned himself. But how is it that the Law is not made for a righteous man, if for a righteous man also it is necessary, not to lead one who is unrighteous to justifying grace, but to be used lawfully by one who is already righteous. Or is it perhaps the case (Nay, not perhaps but assuredly) that the man who is already righteous lawfully uses the Law when he applies it as a menace to the unrighteous; in order that when the disease of unwonted desire begins to be intensified in them by

[1] Rom. xi. 6. [2] S. John i. 14.

the provocation of being a thing forbidden, and, by the cumulative effect of their previous transgressions, they should flee by faith to justifying grace, and becoming delighted with the sweetness of righteousness, through the gift of the Spirit, they may escape the penalty of the letter which threatens them. Thus these two Apostolic statements that even a righteous man uses the Law lawfully, and yet Law is not made for a righteous man—are not contraries nor opposed to one another. For he is not justified by it, but by the Law of faith, whereby he believed that it was impossible for him in any way to fulfil through his own weakness what the law of works commands, unless he were supported by the grace of God.

17. Accordingly he says 'Where then is your glorying? It is shut out. By what Law? Of works? No, but of the law of faith.'[1] He may be using the term glorying in the sense of something to be commended, namely, that which is in the Law, and says that it is excluded, not in the sense of being driven away, but in the sense of being forced out into prominence. This is the sense in which certain silversmiths are called excluders (or pressers out). Thus it says in the Psalms 'That they may be excluded who are tried by silver:'[2] that is, that they may become prominent who are tried by the Word of the Lord. For elsewhere also it is said: 'The words of the Lord are pure words, silver tried by fire.'[3] Or the Apostle may desire to refer to a sinful glorying, born of pride, the conduct of those who, when they

[1] Rom. iii. 27. [2] Ps. lxvii. 31. [3] Ps. xi. 7.

appear to themselves to live righteously, glory as if it were not due to a gift received. And glorying of this sort the Apostle says is excluded (that is, cast out and thrown away) not by the law of works, but by the law of faith. For by the law of faith every man perceives that if he lives at all a life which is good, he owes it to the grace of God, and that, if he is to be perfected in the love of righteousness, he can acquire it from no other source.

18. And this reflection makes a man to be godly since godliness is true wisdom. By godliness I mean what the Greeks call *θεοσέβεια*. It is the sort of godliness commended in the Book of Job when it is said to man 'behold, godliness is wisdom.'[1] If we interpret the word *θεοσέβεια* according to its original meaning, it may be called the adoration of God (Dei cultus). And the central point of this adoration is that the soul should not be ungrateful. Thus in that most true and unrivalled sacrifice[2] we are urged to give thanks unto our Lord God. But it would be ungrateful to ascribe to oneself anything which comes to it from God. And this is especially the case with righteousness. For its works are more our real self-expression. To glory in this would be no ordinary glorying (such as in wealth or physical beauty or eloquence, and the other endowments of body or of mind, whether of an outer or of an inward nature, which even criminals also may possess); for it would be glorying in qualities which are the best of all good things, and would be seemingly the attitude of the wise. It is this fault which has

[1] Job xxviii. 28.

[2] i.e. of the Eucharist.

driven even distinguished men to drift from the unchanging nature of God down to the shameful practice of idolatry. Hence the same Apostle in this very Epistle, in which he is so ardent a champion of grace, after describing himself as a debtor both to the Greeks and Barbarians, to the wise and foolish, and that as far as is within his power, he is ready to preach the Gospel also to those who were at Rome, adds, 'for I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith, as it is written, but the righteous lives by faith.'[1] This is the righteousness of God which is veiled in the Old Covenant and revealed in the New. It is called the righteousness of God because by imparting it God makes men righteous; just as 'the Salvation of the Law'[2] is that whereby He saves. And this is the faith from which and unto which it is revealed: that is from the faith of its proclaimers to the faith of those who obey it. By this faith of Jesus Christ (that is, which Christ brought to us) we believe that such righteousness as we now possess, and its future increase, come to us of God. Therefore we give thanks to Him, with that reverence with which He only is to be worshipped.

19. Nor is it without reason that the Apostle turns from this point to describe with horror those who, light-minded and puffed up as they are by that fault of which I have just spoken, uplifted by them-

[1] Rom. i. 16, 17. [2] Ps. iii. 9.

selves as through empty space, where they could not rest, but must needs be broken and shattered in pieces, have fallen down upon the fictions of idolatry as though upon stones. For since the Apostle had commended the godliness of faith, whereby being justified we ought to be grateful to God, by way of suggesting the contrary which we are to abhor he says: 'for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down[1] the truth in unrighteousness: for that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being perceived through the things which are made; namely, His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse: because knowing God they did not glorify Him as God, nor give Him thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they were made fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts and serpents.'[2]

Observe that he did not charge them with ignorance of the truth, but with holding the truth in unrighteousness. But because it came into his mind to inquire from what source men to whom God had not given the Law could desire a knowledge of the truth, he was not silent as to whence they might be able to obtain it. For he said that it was through the visible things

[1] Detinent. [2] Rom. i. 18-23.

of the creation that they arrived at an apprehension of the invisible things of the Creator. For undoubtedly, as far as great minds assiduously investigated, so far they were able to find. In what then did their godlessness consist? It consisted in the fact that 'although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, or give Him thanks, but became vain in their imaginations.' Vanity is the natural disease of those who delude themselves into imagining that they are something when they are nothing. Overclouding themselves by this swelling pride, of which the sacred singer who says 'in thy light shall we see light,'[1] implores that its foot may not come against him, they are finally turned away from the very light of changeless truth, and 'their foolish heart is darkened.' For although they knew God, their heart was not wise; rather it was foolish, because they did not glorify Him as God nor give Him thanks. For unto men God said 'behold, godliness is wisdom': and thus by 'Saying that they were wise' (which must be interpreted ascribing, their wisdom to themselves) 'they became fools.'

20. Is there any need to explain the words which follow? These men, these men I say, who were able to perceive the Creator through the creation, to what depth they fell headlong through this ungodliness, since 'God resisteth the proud,'[2] and in what depths they were submerged, is better described in the following passage of this Epistle than in any words of mine. Indeed in the present work I have not

[1] Ps. xxxvi. 11. [2] S. James iv. 6.

undertaken an exposition of the Epistle.[1] I am only attempting to prove, relying chiefly on its evidence, that the divine assistance given us to work righteousness, does not consist in the Law which God gave us full of good and holy precepts; but in the fact that our will, without which we can do no good, is assisted and uplifted by the imparted spirit of grace, without whose assistance that teaching[2] is the letter that killeth; because it holds men guilty of transgressing it, instead of justifying the ungodly. For as the knowledge of God brought no salvation to those who apprehended Him through the creation, 'because while they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God nor give Him thanks, but considered themselves to be wise': so neither does the knowledge how men ought to live, which is derived through the Law, bring justification; for 'desiring to establish their own righteousness they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.'[3]

21. It is accordingly important to consider, and if we can to observe and distinguish, the difference between the Law of human actions, that is the Law of works, by which that glorying is not excluded, and the Law of faith by which it is excluded. A man's first impulse might be to say that the Law of works existed in Judaism, but the Law of faith in Christianity; forasmuch as circumcision and other similar works contained in the Law[4] are precisely those which the Christian system does not retain. But

[1] i.e. to the Romans.
[2] i.e. given by the Law
[3] Rom. x. 3.
[4] i.e. Jewish Law.

what a fallacy this classification is, I have all this while been labouring to show, and perhaps I have already succeeded in showing it to those who are sharp in appreciating distinctions, to yourself especially, and to those who resemble you. Yet since the matter is one of great importance, it will not be out of place, if, with a view to make it plain, we linger again and again over other testimonies. Now the Apostle is speaking of the Law by which no one is justified. He says it came in beside that transgression might abound.[1] But to protect it from the criticisms of the ignorant and the charges of the profane, he says: 'What therefore shall we say? Is the Law sin? God forbid. But I had not known sin except through the Law. For I had not known covetousness except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin finding occasion, wrought in me through the Commandment all manner of covetousness,'[2] He says also, 'The Law indeed is holy and the Commandment is holy and righteous and good'.[3] 'But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, worked death to me through that which is good.'[4] It is therefore the letter itself which killeth, which says, 'Thou shalt not covet': concerning which he says again what I have previously mentioned, 'For through the Law cometh the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through

[1] Rom. v. 20.
[2] Rom. vii. 7-13.
[3] Rom. vii. 12.
[4] Rom. vii. 13.

faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction. For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, for the showing forth of His righteousness, because of the setting forth of previous sins, in the forbearance of God, to show forth His righteousness at this present season, that He might be righteous and the justifier of him who is of faith in Jesus.'[1]

And then he adds the passage with which we are now dealing: 'where then is thy glorying? It is excluded. By what Law? Of works? No, but by the Law of faith.'[2] It is therefore this very law of works itself which says, 'thou shalt not covet'; because by it is the knowledge of sin. I want therefore to know, will anyone venture to tell me that the command 'thou shalt not covet' is no utterance of the law of faith? For if that were so, what reason could be given why we who are under it should not sin with security and impunity? Now that is precisely what those men thought the Apostle maintained, of whom he says, 'And as some affirm that we say, "Let us do evil that good may come," whose condemnation is just.'[3] But if (the law of faith) itself does say, 'thou shalt not covet' (as a whole host of passages in the Gospels and Apostolic letters incessantly witness and declare) then why is not this (law of faith) itself described as a law of works? For the fact that it does not retain

[1] Rom. iii. 23-26. [2] Rom. iii. 27. [3] Rom. iii. 8.

the works of the old sacraments, such as circumcision and the rest, does not make the sacraments which it does possess, and which are adapted to the present period, cease to be works. Nor was it a question of sacramental works when reference was made to the Law as causing a knowledge of sin, and because through it no one is justified. Therefore it is not through this law that glorying is excluded, but through the law of faith by which the righteous lives. But does not the knowledge of sin come through this (law) also, seeing that this (law) also says ' thou shalt not covet ' ?

22. What then the difference is I will briefly explain. What the law of works commands by threatening the law of faith secures by believing. The one says ' thou shalt not covet ' : the other says ' When I perceived that no one could have self-control unless God gave it ; and that this was the very essence of wisdom to know whose gift it was; I approached unto the Lord and besought Him.'[1] That is the wisdom which is called godliness, with which the Father of lights is worshipped, from whom every good gift and every perfect gift proceeds. Now this worship consists in the sacrifice of praise and giving of thanks, so that God's worshipper does not glory in himself but in God. Accordingly, by the law of works God says, Do what I command : by the law of faith we say to God, Give what Thou commandest. Now the law commands in order to advise us what faith must do. That is to say that the person

[1] Wisdom viii. 21.

commanded, if unable as yet (to obey), should know what it is he must ask: and if he is forthwith able (to obey) and obediently perform it, he should know of whose gift it cometh that he is able (to obey). 'For we have not received the spirit of this world,' says this same unremitting preacher of grace, 'but the spirit which is of God, that we may know what things are given to us by God.'[1] Now what is the spirit of this world, unless it is the spirit of pride? By this their foolish heart is darkened who, knowing God, did not glorify Him as God by giving of thanks.

Nor is it by any other spirit that they also are deceived who, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, are not subject to the righteousness of God. From these considerations it appears to me that he is far more a child of faith who knows from what source to expect what as yet he has not, than he who ascribes to himself whatever he has: although to both of these the man is to be preferred who both has and knows from whom he has it; always provided that he does not believe himself to be what as yet he is not, lest he fall into the fault of the Pharisee,[2] who thanked God for what he possessed, but asked for nothing further to be given him; just as if he needed nothing to increase and complete his righteousness.

After considering and discussing these things with such powers as the Lord has seen fit to give me, I gather that a man is not justified by commanding him to lead a good life, but by faith in Jesus Christ, that

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [2] Luke xviii. 11–12.

is, not by the law of works but by the law of faith; not by the letter but by the spirit, not by the merits of human actions but by freely granted grace.

23. Now it is true the Apostle appears so to rebuke and correct those who were being advised to practise circumcision, that he calls circumcision itself by the title, the Law, as also other observances of the same Law, which, as mere shadows of the future, Christians do now reject, since they hold that which those shadows symbolically foretold. Yet he desires that Law, by which he says that no man is justified, to be understood not only of those sacraments which were the symbols of the future, but also of those works which whosoever performs lives righteously, wherein is included the command 'thou shalt not covet.' And in order that what I say may become yet clearer, let us look at the Decalogue itself. For Moses indeed received the Law upon the mountain, written on tables of stone by the finger of God, to give it to the people. This Law is comprised in Ten Commandments. Nothing is prescribed concerning circumcision, nor concerning animal sacrifices which are not now offered by Christians. Can anyone tell me what there is in these Ten Commandments, excepting the observance of the Sabbath, which is not to be observed by a Christian: whether it concerns the prohibition against making or worshipping idols, and any other gods beside the one true God, or concerning taking the name of God in vain, or concerning the honour to be given to parents, or concerning the avoidance of fornication, murder, theft, false witness, adultery, covetousness. Which

of these Commandments would any person say that a Christian ought not to keep? Or can it by any possibility be that by 'the letter that killeth' the Apostle does not mean the Law written on the two tables, but that law of circumcision, and other ancient and now obsolete sacraments? But how can we so think when it contains the command, 'thou shalt not covet': through which command, although it is 'holy and just and good, sin,' says the Apostle, 'deceived me and through it killed me?' What else can this be but 'the letter that killeth?'

24. Although in the passage itself addressed to the Corinthians where he says, 'the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life' he speaks more clearly, he does not desire any other letter to be understood than the Decalogue itself written on those two tables. For thus he says: 'Ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh. And such confidence have we through Christ to Godward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a New Covenant; not of the letter but of the spirit: for the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life. For if the ministration of death written and engraven on stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face, which glory was passing away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation

be glory, much more does the ministration of righteousness abound in glory.' [1]

Much might be said concerning this passage, but perhaps another time would be more appropriate. For the present, notice how he speaks of 'the letter which killeth,' bringing in, as if its contrary, the life giving Spirit. Surely he calls it the ministration of death engraven in letters of stone, and the ministration of condemnation: because the law came in beside, that transgression might abound. But, on the other hand, the commandments themselves are so useful and profitable to him who does them, that unless a man does them he cannot have life. Or can it really be that the Decalogue is called 'the letter that killeth' because that one command about the Sabbath is placed therein? And is this one command so called because any person who observes that day at the present time in its literal meaning, is carnally minded, and to be carnally minded is death? And are we to regard those Nine Commandments, which are rightly to be observed literally, as not belonging to the law of works by which no man is justified, but to the law of faith by which the righteous man lives? Who can maintain the absurdity that 'the ministration of death engraved in letters of stone' does not refer to the Ten Commandments, but only to the one concerned with the Sabbath? For if so, where shall we place the following passages: 'The Law worketh wrath; for where no law is there is no transgression:' [2] and, 'until the Law sin was in the

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 2-9. [2] Rom. iv. 15.

world, but sin was not imputed when there was no Law:'[1] and that which we have so many times repeated, 'through the Law is the knowledge of sin:'[2] and above all the passage where the Apostle still more clearly brought out the point in question, 'I had not known covetousness, unless the Law had said, thou shalt not covet?'[3]

25. Give attention to the whole context, and see whether it says anything about circumcision or Sabbath or any thing else to do with a foreshadowing sacrament; whether the whole point of the utterance is not that the letter which forbids a man to sin does not give him life, but rather kills him by increasing desire and multiplying sin through transgression, unless grace sets man free through the law of faith which is in Christ Jesus, when love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.[4] For when he had said, 'that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of the letter:'[5] he asks 'What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? God forbid. Howbeit I had not known sin, except through the Law. For I had not known covetousness, except the Law had said, thou shalt not covet. But sin, finding occasion through the commandment, wrought in me all manner of covetousness. For apart from the Law sin is dead. And I was alive apart from the Law once: but when the commandment came sin revived. But I died, and the commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death. For sin, finding occasion through the

[1] Rom. v. 13. [2] Rom. iii. 20. [3] Rom. vii. 7.
[4] Rom. v. 5. [5] Rom. vii. 5-25.

commandment, beguiled me, and through it slew me. And so indeed the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, worked death to me through that which is good; that through the commandment sin might be made exceeding sinful. For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I work I know not. For not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate, that I do; but if what I would not, that I do; I consent unto the Law that it is good. So now it is no more I that work it, but sin which dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that work it, but sin which dwelleth in me. I find then the Law, that to me who would do good, since evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see another Law in my members, warring against the Law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the Law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I myself with the mind serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the Law of sin.'[1]

[1] Rom. vii. 5-25.

26. It is then evident that the oldness of the letter, if the newness of the Spirit is wanting, makes us guilty through the knowledge of sin, rather than sets us free from sin. Hence it is elsewhere written, ' He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.'[1] Not that the law itself is an evil, but because the goodness of the commandment consists in the letter which points the way, not in the Spirit which enables : and if this commandment is obeyed through the fear of punishment, and not though love of righteousness, it is obeyed slavishly, not freely, and therefore not at all. For no fruit is good which does not spring from the root of love. If however there be present faith which works by love,[2] then one begins to delight in the Law of God after the inner man ; and this delight is not a gift of the letter but of the Spirit ; even though another Law in our members still opposes the Law of the mind, until all the oldness is changed, and passes into newness, which day by day is increased in the inner man, while the Grace of God frees us from the body of this death, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

27. This grace lay concealed under a veil in the Old Covenant, but it has been revealed in the Gospel of Christ in that perfectly ordered dispensation of times as God knows how to order all things. And perhaps it is part of this very concealment that in the Decalogue that was given on Mount Sinai, the reference to the Sabbath alone was hidden under a symbolical commandment. Now the Sabbath is the day

[1] Eccles. i. 18. [2] Gal. v. 6.

of sanctification. Nor is it meaningless that, among all the works which God made, sanctification is first mentioned when He rested from His labours. This is not the place to discuss that point. But what I consider singularly applicable to the present subject is, that it was not without purpose that the people was ordered to abstain from servile work on that day, meaning from sin; for not to sin belongs to sanctification, that is to the gift of God through the Holy Spirit. What alone was placed among the rest in the obscurity of symbol under which the Jews observed the Sabbath, in that Law which was written on two tables of stone, was done in order to signify by this very circumstance that then was the period for the concealment of grace which was to be revealed in the New Covenant through the Passion of Christ as by the rending of a veil.[1] For, says the Apostle, 'when it shall turn to Christ, the veil shall be taken away.'

28. 'Now the Lord is the spirit; and where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.'[2] Now this Spirit of God by Whose gift we are justified (whereby it comes to pass that sin delights us not, which is a state of freedom, even as when we are without this Spirit sin delights us, which is a state of slavery, from whose works we must abstain) this Holy Spirit through Whom Love is shed abroad in our hearts, which is the fulfilment of the Law, is called in the Gospel the finger of God. Both those tables then were written with the finger of God, and

[1] S. Matt. xxvii. 51. [2] Cor. iii. 16–17.

the finger of God is the Spirit of God through whom we are sanctified, so that living by faith we may work good works through love. Is there not something impressive in the similarity and yet distinction revealed herein? Fifty days can be counted from the celebration of the Passover, which was directed through Moses to be kept by the symbolical slaying of a lamb, to signify the future Passion of the Lord, to the day when Moses received the Law on tables written by the finger of God. In a similar manner, when fifty days had been completed after the slaying and resurrection of Him Who was led as a lamb to be slaughtered, the finger of God, that is the Holy Spirit, filled the faithful who were assembled together in unity.

29. And yet in this wonderful harmony there is this very great difference, that in the one case the people was withheld by awful dread from approaching the place where the Law was being given, whereas in the other the people were assembled together in expectation of His promised advent, when the Holy Spirit came upon them. In the one case the finger of God wrought on tables of stone, in the other on the hearts of men. In the one case the Law was imposed externally to frighten the unrighteous, in the other it was given inwardly to justify men. For this, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment' written in those tables, 'it is included', he says, 'in this word, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love of one's neighbour worketh no ill. Therefore Love is the fulfilling of the

Law.' [1] This was not written on tables of stone, but 'shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.' [2] Therefore the Law of God is love. To this 'the carnal mind is not subject; neither indeed can it be.' [3] When then the works of love are written in tables in order to alarm the carnal mind, it is the law of works, and the letter which slays the transgressor: but when love itself is spread abroad in the heart of the believing, it is the law of faith, and the Spirit giving life to him who loves.

30. See now how closely this difference agrees with those Apostolic words which a little while ago I quoted in another connection, postponing their fuller discussion. 'Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be an epistle of Christ ministered by us, not written with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone but in fleshy tables of the heart.' Observe how he shows that the one is written outside the man, to alarm him from without, and the other inside the man, in order to justify him within. And he calls them fleshy tables of the heart (meaning) not the carnal mind, but a living person having sensation contrasted with a stone which is senseless. And what he says a little after, that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly on the face of Moses, and that accordingly he spoke to them through a veil, signifies that the letter of the law justifies no man, and that a veil is interposed in reading the Old Covenant, until we turn to Christ and the veil is taken away. That is, until we pass to grace, and under-

[1] Rom. xiii. 9, 10. [2] Rom. v. 5. [3] Rom. viii. 7.

stand that our justification, whereby we do what he commands, comes to us from Him. He commands us in order that, since in ourselves we fail, we may take refuge in Him. So after He had been most careful to say 'such trust have we through Christ in God,' lest we should ascribe this to our own strength, he proceeds at once to commend the grace of which we are speaking, and says, 'not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also has made us sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.' [1]

31. And so because, as he says elsewhere, 'the Law was imposed for the sake of transgressions,' [2] that is that letter which is written outside a man, therefore he calls it both a ministration of death, and a ministration of condemnation. But this other Law, that is, of the New Covenant, he calls the ministration of the Spirit, and the ministration of righteousness; because by the gift of the Spirit we work righteousness, and are set free from the condemnation of transgression. The former therefore is abolished: the latter abides. The school-master who terrifies us will be taken away when love succeeds to fear. For 'where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.' But this ministration, so the Apostle teaches, is not the product of human merits, but of mercy: 'wherefore having this ministry, as we have received mercy let us not faint; but let us cast away the hidden

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 5-6. [2] Gal. iii. 19.

things of disorder, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully '.[1] By this craftiness and deceit he would have us understand hypocrisy whereby the proud desire to appear righteous. Whence in that Psalm which the Apostle quotes in evidence for this very grace, it is written, ' blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin, and in whose mouth there is no guile '.[2] This is the confession of lowly saints, not of men who boast themselves to be what they are not. And shortly after the Apostle writes, ' For we preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ the Lord, and ourselves your servants through Jesus. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ '.[3] This is the knowledge of His glory, the knowledge that He is the light which illumines our darkness. Observe then how he impresses this thought on us : ' but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us '.[4] And then he goes on with greater fullness to commend this same grace in our Lord Jesus Christ, until he comes to speak of that vesture of the righteousness of faith, whereby being clothed we shall not be found naked, and for which we yearn being burdened with mortality, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. And see what he adds here :

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 1–2.
[2] Rom. iv. 8 ; Ps. xxxi. 2.
[3] 2 Cor. iv. 5–6.
[4] 2 Cor. iv. 7.

'Now He Who hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God, who hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit'. And after a little he adds: 'that we may be the righteousness of God in Him'. This righteousness of God is not that whereby He is righteous, but that whereby we are made righteous by Him.

32. Therefore let no Christian wander from this faith which alone is Christian. Neither let anyone who shrinks from saying that we become righteous through our own selves, and not by the grace of God working this in us (because he sees that faithful and godly people cannot endure this assertion), take refuge in the assertion that the reason why we cannot be justified without the working of God's grace is that He gave the Law, He appointed its teaching, He gave us Holy Commandments. For beyond all question these things without the aid of the Spirit are the letter which kills: but when the life-giving spirit is present, He causes that to be loved as written within which the Law caused to be feared when written without.

33. Look into this a little while in that passage also where the Prophet gives the clearest testimony on the subject. 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will accomplish a New Covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah: not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out from the land of Egypt: for they have not persevered in my Covenant, and I have forsaken them, saith the Lord. For this is the Covenant which I will ordain for the House of Israel: after those days, saith the

Lord, I will put my Laws in their heart, and in their mind will I write them: and I will be their God and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every one his neighbour and every one his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least unto the greatest of them; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more'.[1]

What are we to say to this? It would be impossible, or very difficult, to find in the ancient Scriptures, except in this prophetic passage, any mention in so many words of the New Covenant. In many a place it is symbolized and foretold, but not expressly mentioned by its name. Consider therefore with care what difference God orders to exist between the two Covenants, the Old and the New.

34. When He had said, 'Not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt,' see what He added: 'because they continued not in my Covenant.' He ascribes it to their fault that they did not continue in God's Covenant. He does this lest the fault should be ascribed to the Law which they had received. For it is this Law which Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil. Nevertheless the ungodly are not justified by this law but by grace. For this is the work of the life-giving Spirit, without whom the letter kills. 'For if a law had been given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law:

[1] Jerem. xxxi. 31–34.

but the Scripture hath included all things under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.' [1] By this promise, that is, by the kindness of God, the Law itself is fulfilled, which without this promise makes men transgressors : either by the actual commission of some evil deed, if the flame of desire surpasses even the restraining influence of fear ; or at least in the will itself, if the fear of penalties overrule the seductiveness of desire. And in the passage ' the Scripture hath included all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe,' he points out the benefit of this ' inclusion.' For to what purpose is this ' inclusion,' unless, as he says elsewhere, ' before indeed faith came, we were kept under the Law, included for the faith which was afterwards revealed.' [2] The Law was therefore given in order that grace might be sought : grace was given in order that the Law might be fulfilled. That the Law was not fulfilled was not the fault of the Law but of the carnal mind. And this fault had to be pointed out by the Law before it could be remedied by grace. ' For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh ; that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.' [3] Hence in the passage quoted from the Prophet he says : ' I will complete a New Covenant with the House of Israel and with the

[1] Gal. iii. 21-22. [2] Gal. iii. 23. [3] Rom. viii. 3-4.

House of Judah: [And, "I will complete," must mean I will fulfil]. 'Not according to the Covenant which I made with their Fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.' [1]

35. The former Covenant therefore was old because the latter is new. But whence is it that the one is old and the other new, if the same law is fulfilled in the New Covenant which said in the Old 'thou shalt not covet'? He answers, 'because they did not continue in my Covenant, and I forsook them, saith the Lord.' [2] It is therefore called the Old Covenant on account of the infirmity of the old man which the letter, commanding and threatening, by no means healed. The other Covenant is called the New, because of the newness of the Spirit, which heals the new man from the faults of the old. Then consider what follows, and see in how strong a light this is made clear; though men who trust in themselves will not see it: 'For this is the Covenant which I will make with the House of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will place my Laws in their heart, and in their mind will I write them.' [3] See then the source of the Apostle's language which I have already quoted: 'not in tables of stone but in tables of the heart;' for it is 'not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.' Nor was it, I think, for any other reason that the Apostle wished to mention the New Covenant in this passage (when he says 'Who hath made us sufficient as ministers of the

[1] Jer. xxxi. 32. [2] Jer. xxxi. 32. [3] Jer. xxxi. 33.

New Covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit'), except that he had in view this prophetic utterance, when he said 'Not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart;' for the words of the prophet are, 'in their hearts will I write them,' when he makes an explicit promise of the New Covenant.

36. What then are the Laws of God written in the heart by God Himself, but the very presence of the Holy Spirit, who is the finger of God, by whose presence Love is shed abroad in our hearts; Love which is the fulfilment of the Law, and the end of the commandment.[1] Now the promises of the Old Covenant are earthly, although (except the Sacraments, which were shadows of things to come, such as circumcision, and the Sabbath, and other observances of days, and ceremonies concerning certain foods,[2] and the complicated ceremonial of sacrifices and sacred things; all of which were in accordance with the ancient servile yoke of a carnal law) it contained such commands concerning righteousness as we even now are ordered to observe, especially those which are formulated for the most part in those two tables, without any symbol or shadow, for example, 'thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not covet, and if there is any other commandment which is briefly comprehended in this saying, love thy neighbour as thyself.'[3] Nevertheless, as I said, in that Covenant earthly and temporal promises are proclaimed, the

[1] 1 Tim. i. 5. [2] See Retract ii. 37.
[3] Exod. xx. 14-17; Rom. xiii. 9.

good things which belong to this corruptible flesh; although doubtless in them the eternal and heavenly things which belong to the New Covenant are symbolised. But what is promised now is the good things belonging to the heart, the good things of the mind, the good things of the Spirit, that is to say, intellectual good things; since it is said 'I will place my Laws in their mind, and in their hearts will I write them.' By this he implies that they should not fear the Law which terrifies from without, but should love the Law of righteousness itself which dwells within.

37. Then also He adds the reward: 'And I will be their God and they shall be My people.' This resembles what the Psalmist says to God, 'It is good for me to hold me fast by God.'[1] 'I will be,' he says, 'their God, and they shall be My people.' What is better than this good, what is happier than this happiness: to live to God, to live on God, with Whom is the well of life, and in Whose light we shall see light?[2] Of this life the Lord Himself says, 'But this is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the one true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent:'[3] meaning to know Thee and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou has sent, to be the one true God. For this is what He Himself promised to those who love Him: 'He that loveth Me keepeth My commandments, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will show Myself to him:'[4] that is, doubtless in the

[1] Ps. lxxii. 28.
[2] Ps. xxxv. 10.
[3] John xvii. 3.
[4] John xiv. 21.

form of God in which He is equal to the Father; not in the form of a servant, for in this He will show Himself to the godless also. Then indeed will come to pass what is written 'Let the ungodly be taken away, that he see not the Glory of the Lord,' [1] when 'the evil shall go into eternal fire and the righteous into eternal life.' [2]

Now this eternal life, as I have said, is explained to be the knowledge of the one true God. Accordingly John also says: 'Beloved, we are the Sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' [3] This likeness begins now to be formed again in us, while the inner man is being renewed from day to day,[4] after the image of Him Who created him.[5]

38. But what is this commencement, or of what extent is it, compared with that complete perfection which in the future is to be? The Apostle giving some sort of illustration of those ineffable things from things which are known, compares it to childhood and maturity. 'When I was a child,' he says, 'I spake as a child,—I felt as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.'[6] But what prompted him to say this he immediately explains; 'for now we see,' he says, 'in a mirror in a riddle, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I have been known.'

[1] Isa. xxvi. 10. [2] Matt. xxvi. 10. [3] Isa. iii. 2.
[4] 2 Cor. iv. 16. [5] Col. iii. 10. [6] 1 Cor. xiii. 11–12.

39. With the same object it is further stated by the Prophet whose witness we are discussing, that in God is the reward, in Him is the end, in Him is the perfection of happiness, in Him the sum of a blessed and eternal life. For after saying, 'I will be their God, and they shall be My people,' he immediately added, 'and they shall not teach every man his fellow and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least unto the greatest of them.'[1] Now the present time is assuredly the time of the New Covenant, to which belongs the promise given by the Prophet in those words which I have quoted from his prophecy. Why then does each man still say to his fellow and to his brother 'Know the Lord'? or perhaps this does not refer to the preaching of the Gospel, and the very essence of its preaching is that it should be said everywhere. For why does the Apostle call himself the teacher of the Gentiles,[2] except because thereby he fulfilled his own saying; 'How shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?'[3] Since then this preaching is extending everywhere, how can this be the time of the New Covenant of which the Prophet says, 'and they shall not teach every man his fellow and his brother, saying, know the Lord; for all shall know Me, from the least unto the greatest of them'; unless the Prophet has included in his promise the eternal reward of the New

[1] Jer. xxxi. 34. [2] 1 Tim. ii. 7. [3] Rom. x. 14.

Covenant, that is, the beatific contemplation of God Himself?

40. What then is meant by 'all from the least unto the greatest of them,' unless all pertaining spiritually to the house of Israel, to the house of Judah, that is, to the sons of Isaac, to the seed of Abraham? For such is the promise, wherein it was said to him, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called. For not they who are the sons of the flesh are sons of God; but the sons of the promise are reckoned for a seed. For this is the word of promise: at this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this, but Rebecca also conceived by one, namely, Isaac our father. For of the children yet unborn, and having done nothing either good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who called them, it was said to him, the elder shall serve the younger.'[1] 'This is the house of Israel, or rather the house of Judah, for Christ came of the tribe of Judah. This is the house of the children of promise, not the children of their own works, but of the loving-kindness of God. For what God promises He Himself performs. He does not promise and another perform, which indeed is not to promise but to foretell. Hence it is "not of works but of Him who calleth:"'[2] lest it should be their own, not God's; lest the reward should not be reckoned as of grace but as of debt, and so grace would no longer be grace (grace, I say,) whose strenuous champion and maintainer was the least of the Apostles who laboured

[1] Rom. ix. 7–13. [2] Rom. ix. 11.

more abundantly than they all, yet not he but the grace of God that was with him.[1] 'For all,' he says, 'shall know Me.' All: the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 'Not all, however, are Israel who are of Israel': but all to whom it is said in the Psalm for the morning aid (that is, for the new light, that is the light of the New Covenant) 'all ye seed of Jacob, glorify Him; fear Him, all ye seed of Israel.'[2] All the seed universally, all the seed, that is to say, of the promised and of the called, but only of those who are called according to His purpose. 'For whom he did foreordain, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.'[3] 'Therefore it is of faith, that the promise according to grace might be sure to all the seed; not only to that which is of the Law' (that is, which comes from the Old Covenant into the New); but to that also which is of faith, who have not previously received the Law. And the faith is the faith of Abraham, that is, those who are imitators of Abraham's faith, 'who is the father of us all, as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.'[4] All these, then, foreordained, called, justified, glorified, will know God by the grace of the New Covenant, 'from the least unto the greatest of them.'

41. As then the Law of works, written in tables of stone, and its reward, the land of promise, which the house of Israel after the flesh received when it was

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 9.–10.
[2] Ps. xxi. 24.
[3] Rom. viii. 28.
[4] Rom. iv. 17.

delivered out of Egypt, belongs to the Old Covenant: so the Law of faith, written in the heart, and its reward, the beatific vision,[1] which the house of Israel after the Spirit will obtain when delivered from the present world, belongs to the New Covenant. Then will come to pass what the Apostle has spoken: 'whether there be prophecies they shall fail, whether there be tongues they shall cease, whether there be knowledge it shall be done away':[2] meaning the childish knowledge in which the present life is lived, which is but in part, through a mirror in a riddle. For as long as future succeeds to past prophecy is required. It is for this cause also that tongues (that is a multiplicity of signs) are required: since it is by variety of signs that variety of ideas are suggested to him who does not as yet behold with purified intelligence the eternal light of evident truth. But when that which is perfect is come, all that which is partial shall be done away. Then He Who assumed flesh to appear to flesh shall show His real self to those who love Him. Then shall it be eternal life to know the one true God. Then shall we be like Him,[3] for then shall we know even as also we are known.[4] Then 'shall every man no more teach his fellow or his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know Him, from the least even unto the greatest of them.[5] This may be understood in many ways: either that there also each saint differs in glory as star from star.[6] It is immaterial whether we say 'from the

[1] Species contemplationis.
[2] 1 Cor. xiii.
[3] 1 John iii. 2.
[4] 1 Cor. xxii. 12.
[5] Jer. xxxi. 34.
[6] 1 Cor. xv. 41.

least unto the greatest,' as the actual expression is, or say from the greatest to the least. As also it is immaterial whether we interpret 'the least' to mean those who simply believe, and 'the greatest' those who are also able to understand (so far as in this life that is possible), what is the incorporeal and unchanging light. Or whether by 'the least' he means us to understand those who are later in time, and by 'the greatest' those who are earlier in time. For all will receive the promised vision of God at the same time: since even they foresaw these better things for us, in order that they should not acquire perfection without us. And so 'the least' are considered as the earlier, because they are not delayed so long: just as in the Gospel illustrations of the penny a day, which they were the first to receive who were the last to enter the vineyard. Or possibly the least and the greatest are to be understood in some other way which at present escapes my intelligence.

42. But I ask you to fix your mind as far as possible on the point which I am labouring my utmost to prove. When the Prophet promised the New Covenant, not according to the Covenant formerly made with the people of Israel when they had been delivered out of Egypt, he said nothing about any change in the sacrifices or sacraments, although undoubtedly such change would follow, as we see that it has followed, and as the same prophetic Scripture witnesses in many other places. All he did was to call attention to the difference, that God would place His Laws within the minds of those who belonged to this Covenant, and would write them in their

hearts. And hence the Apostle derived the thought 'not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.' And that the eternal reward of this righteousness was not the land from which the Amorites and Hittites, and other nations therein mentioned were driven out, but God Himself, to whom it is good to hold fast, so that the good thing which they love in God is God Himself whom they love; between whom and men nothing can make a barrier but sins which can only be forgiven by the same grace. Accordingly after He had said 'for all shall know Me, from the least unto the greatest of them;' He immediately adds 'for I will be merciful to their Iniquity and their sins will I remember no more.'[1]

By the Law of works, then, the Lord says, 'Thou shalt not covet:' by the Law of Faith he says, 'without Me ye can do nothing;'[2] for the Lord was speaking of good works, that is, the fruit of the vine branches. Here then the difference between the Old Covenant and the New is plain: the former is a Law written on tables, the latter written in the heart, so that what in the former terrifies us from without, in the latter delights us within; in the former a man becomes a transgressor through the letter which killeth, in the latter he becomes a lover of the Law through the life-giving Spirit. We are therefore not to maintain that the manner in which God helps us to work righteousness and works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, is by appealing to our senses

[1] Jer. xxxi. 34. [2] John xv. 5.

from without by precepts of righteousness, but by giving the increase within, and by shedding abroad love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who is given to us.

43. We are next to consider in what sense it is that the Apostle says ' for when the Gentiles who have not the Law, do by nature the things of the Law, they, not having the Law, are a Law unto themselves, which show the work of the Law written in their hearts.'[1] For this passage might seem to imply that no clear distinction exists in the New Covenant in the Divine promise to write His Laws in the hearts of His people, inasmuch as the Gentiles possess these Laws by nature. This question therefore has to be discussed; and it is by no means insignificant. For someone will say, if God distinguishes the New Covenant from the old precisely because in the Old He wrote His Law on tables, but in the New has written them in the heart: how are the faithful of the New Covenant to be distinguished from the Gentiles, who have the work of the Law written n their hearts, so that they do by nature the things of the Law; as if they were superior to that ancient people who received the Law written on tables, and in advance of the new nation upon which the New Covenant has conferred what these Gentiles already possess by nature?

44. Is it possible that the nations whom the Apostle mentioned as having the Law written in their hearts were those who belong to the New Covenant?

[1] Rom. ii. 14-15.

We must look to the context from which it is derived. In the first place, commending the Gospel he says 'for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the righteous lives by faith.' Then he goes on to speak of the ungodly whose knowledge of God did not profit them, owing to their pride, because they did not glorify Him as God, nor give Him thanks. Thence he passes on to those who judge other people and do the same things which they condemn (meaning unquestionably the Jews, who gloried concerning the Law of God, although he has not so far mentioned them by name), and so he says, 'Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first and of the Greek: but glory and honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and to the Greek. For there is no acceptance of persons with God. For whosoever have sinned without Law shall also perish without Law. And whosoever have sinned in the Law shall be judged by the Law. For not the hearers of the Law are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified.' To this passage he adds the words under discussion: 'for when the Gentiles who have no Law do by nature the things contained in the Law,' and the rest which I have already quoted. Evidently therefore no others seem to be represented under the title 'Gentiles' than those whom he had previously represented as Greeks, when he said, 'To the Jew first and to the Greek.' Further, if the

Gospel is 'the power of God to salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first and to the Greek; and wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory and honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and to the Greek;' and if this 'Greek' represents the Gentiles, doing by nature the things of the Law, and the work of the Law which they have written in their hearts: then clearly the Gentiles who have the Law written in their hearts belong to the Gospel, which to those who believe is the power of God unto salvation. But to what Gentiles working aright could there be promised glory and honour and peace, if they are placed beyond the grace of the Gospel? For since there is no acceptance of persons with God, and it is not the hearers of the Law but the doers who are justified; it follows that whether a man is a Jew or a Greek, that is, any Gentile who believes, he shall in either case have salvation in the Gospel. For as he afterwards says 'There is no difference. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace.' [1] Or how can it be said that the Greek doer of the Law is justified without the grace of the Saviour?

45. Nor does the Apostle contradict himself in saying that 'the doers of the Law shall be justified;' as if men were justified by their works and not by grace: since he says that a man is freely justified by faith without the works of the Law; and by saying

[1] Rom. iii. 23-24.

'freely,' he desires nothing else to be implied but that works do not precede justification. Indeed he openly says elsewhere, 'if it is of grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.'[1] But the sentence, 'the doers of the Law shall be justified' is to be understood as meaning that they are not otherwise doers of the Law unless they are justified: so that justification is not a supplement to works but precedes them. For what else is meant by 'justified' than made righteous, that is, by Him who justifies the ungodly, and out of an ungodly person makes a righteous one? For just in ordinary converse if we say that men shall be made free, it is understood to mean that freedom is to be given to those who are already men: but if we say, men shall be created, it is not understood that persons were created who were men already, but that in the act of their creation they are made men. Similarly, if it is said, that the doers of the Law shall be honoured, it is not correctly understood except as meaning that honour comes to those who are already doers of the Law: but when it is said 'the doers of the Law shall be justified', what else is said than that the righteous shall be justified? For the doers of the Law are already righteous. Accordingly it is equivalent to saying, doers of the Law shall be created, not as already existing, but to give them existence: so may the Jewish hearers of the Law understand that they need the grace of the Justifier in order to become doers; or the words 'they will be justified' may

[1] Rom. xi. 6.

mean, they will be considered righteous, reckoned righteous, just as it is said of a certain man, ' but he wishing to justify himself,' that is to be considered or reckoned righteous. In the same way we say in one sense, God sanctifies His saints, and in another sense, sanctified be Thy name. For the former means that He makes them holy who were not holy, but the latter that what is always holy in itself should be regarded as holy also by men: that is, that it may be reverently feared.

46. If then the Apostle is referring to the Gentiles doing by nature the things of the Law, and having the work of the Law written in their hearts, and desires us to understand it of believers in Christ (since they do not come to faith like the Jews, through a Law already sent them): there is no reason why we should try to distinguish them from those to whom our Lord, promising by the Prophet the New Covenant, says that He will write His Laws in their hearts. For the Gentiles too, by the in-grafting which the Apostle says was granted to the wild olive, belong to the same olive tree, that is to the same people of God.

Indeed this Apostle's witness too rather agrees with that of the Prophet, that to belong to the New Covenant is to have the Law of God written not on tables but in the heart: that is to say, to embrace the righteousness of the Law with our innermost affections, where faith works by love. ' For God justifies the Gentiles by faith ; ' which ' the Scripture, foreseeing, foretold to Abraham saying, in thy seed shall all the Gentiles be blessed ' : that by this grace

of promise the wild olive should be grafted into the olive, and the faithful Gentiles should be made sons of Abraham in the seed of Abraham, which is Christ; following the faith of him who not having received the Law in tables, and not yet having circumcision itself, 'believed in God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.'[1] And so what the Apostle has said of the Gentiles under these conditions, 'they have the work of the Law written in their hearts,' means the same as his words to the Corinthians, 'not on tables of stone, but on fleshy tables of the heart.'

For so they are made of the house of Israel when their uncircumcision is reckoned for circumcision, showing that the righteousness of the Law does not consist in the cutting of the flesh, but in the love of the heart: since 'if uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision?'[2] And therefore they are sharers in the New Covenant, in the house of the Israel indeed in which there is no guile, for God places His Laws in their minds and writes them in their hearts by His finger, the Holy Spirit, by Whom is there shed abroad the love which is the fulfilling of the Law.

47. Nor need it disturb us that the Apostle says that the Gentiles do the things of the Law by nature, not by the Spirit of God, not by faith, not by grace. For the Spirit of Grace is the agent in this, in order to restore in us the Divine image in which we were

[1] Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 3. [2] Rom. ii. 26.

naturally created. For all sin is contrary to nature, and it is grace that heals sin.

On this account we pray to God, 'Have mercy upon me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.'[1] Accordingly by nature men do the things of the Law, for those who fail to do them fail by their own defect. And by this defect the Law of God is effaced from their hearts. Accordingly when this defect is healed, when God's Law is written there, they do by nature the things of the Law: not that by nature grace is denied, but rather that by grace nature is restored. 'For through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin: and so death passed upon all men, for in him all have sinned.'[2] And therefore since 'there is no difference, they fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace.' By which grace righteousness, which his fault had effaced, is written within the man who is renewed. And this mercy extends to the human race through Jesus Christ our Lord. For 'there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.'

48. But if they who do by nature the things of the Law are not to be understood as being as yet in the number of those justified by the grace of Christ, but rather among those of whom, although they are ungodly and worship not the true God truly and righteously, yet are the doers of certain deeds, which when we read or know or hear, we not only cannot blame by the law of righteousness but must even deservedly and rightly praise (although if the motive which

[1] Ps. xl. 5. [2] Rom. v. 12.

prompted them were analysed, scarcely any might be found to deserve the praise and commendation which is due to righteousness) : yet still since the Divine image is not so utterly worn away in the human soul by the corrosion of earthly affections, that not even the slightest trace thereof is left, and therefore it may reasonably be said that they do or can appreciate somewhat of the law even in the midst of their ungodly life : if this is what is meant by the saying that the ' Gentiles who have no Law,' that is no Law of God, ' do by nature the things of the Law,' and that such men ' are a Law unto themselves,' and ' have the work of the Law written in their hearts,' that is to say that what was imprinted upon them by their likeness to God at their creation is not altogether effaced ; even so the difference which separates the New Covenant from the Old will not be disturbed since the Law of God which through the Old was written on tables (of stone) is through the New written in the heart of the faithful. That which was not altogether destroyed in the old conditions is written therein[1] through renewal. For as the actual image of God, which ungodliness had not entirely destroyed, is renewed in the minds of believers through the New Covenant (for there remained at any rate those rational elements without which the human soul could not exist) ; so also there the Law of God, which is not altogether blotted out by unrighteousness, is forthwith written anew by grace. And this writing within the man, which is justification, is what the Jewish

[1] i.e. in the heart.

Law written on tables cannot produce, since what it produces is only transgression. For these persons themselves were men, and that power of nature was within them by which the reasonable soul perceives and performs some lawful acts. But godliness, which translates men into another life, which is blessed and eternal, has a stainless Law converting souls; that by its light they may be renewed, and there may be fulfilled in them (the words) 'the light of Thy countenance, O Lord, has set its seal upon us.'[1] Since they were turned away from this light they deserved to wax old; nor can they be renewed except by Christian grace, that is, except by the intercession of the Mediator. 'For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all.'[2] And if they of whom I write are strangers to this grace, and in the sense already explained, 'do by nature the things of the Law;' what do their thoughts, excusing themselves 'in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men,'[3] avail, unless perhaps to lessen their punishment? For just as certain venial sins, without which the present life is not lived, do not exclude a righteous person from eternal life; so certain good works, without which any human life, even the very worst, can scarcely be found, avail nothing to secure it. But as in the Kingdom of God, the saints differ in glory as star from star,[4] so in the eternal condemnation it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for

[1] Ps. iv. 7. see Aug. Enar. in Ps. iv. 7.
[2] 1 Tim. ii. 6. [3] Rom. ii. 14-16. [4] 1 Cor. xv. 41.

another city ; [1] and some will be twofold more the children of hell than others ; [2] so neither in the Divine judgment will it be of no account that even within that ungodliness of the condemned, one will have sinned more and another less.

49. What then did the Apostle wish to prove when after saying, to check the pride of the Jews, ' Not the hearers of the Law are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified,' he immediately goes on to speak of those who ' not having the Law, do by nature the things of the Law ? ' if the reference is not to those who belong to the grace of the Mediator, but rather to those who, though they do not worship the true God with true godliness, yet exhibit certain good works in the midst of an ungodly life ? Perhaps he thought that by this he could prove what he had previously said, that ' there is no acceptance of persons with God,' and what he had afterwards added, ' He is not the God of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles.' For even the smallest works of the Law planted in them by nature would not be found in those who had not received the Law, unless they had been derived from what remains of the image of God in them ; and God does not despise this image when they believe in Him, for ' with Him there is no acceptance of persons ? ' In any case, whatever interpretation we accept, it is certain that the grace of God is promised even by the Prophet through the New Covenant, and that this grace consists in the writing of the Divine Laws in the hearts of men, and

[1] Luke x. 12.

[2] Matt. xxiii. 15.

that they come to that knowledge of God wherein 'they shall not teach every man his fellow or his brother, saying, know God; for all shall know Him from the least unto the greatest of them.'[1] This is the gift of the Holy Spirit, by Whom love is shed abroad in our hearts. And this love is of no ordinary kind, it is the love of God out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith, from which the righteous, living in this his pilgrimage, is led onward beyond mirror and riddle and whatever is only partial, to the reality, where he may know face to face, even as he is known. For one thing he has desired of the Lord, and this he does require, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, that so he may behold the delight of the Lord.[2]

50. Let no man therefore glory in that which he seems to have as though he had not received it; not let him suppose that he has received it through the external letter of the law, whether read or heard.

For 'if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died in vain.'[3] But if He did not die in vain, but 'ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men;'[4] then whosoever the man is that has it, this is the source from which he has it. But if a man denies that he has it from this source, either he has it not, or that which he has will be taken away from him.[5] For there is one God who justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.[6] And there is no distinction here as if 'by

[1] Jer. xxxi. 34. [2] Ps. xxvi. 4. [3] Gal. ii. 21.
[4] Ps. lxviii. 18 and Eph. iv. 8. [5] S. L. viii. 18.
[6] Rom. iii. 30.

faith' meant one thing, and 'through faith' another. It is only a variety of speech. In fact, in another place, in speaking of the Gentiles, that is, the uncircumcised, he said, 'Scripture foreseeing that God justifies the Gentiles by faith'.[1] And again, speaking of the circumcision to which he himself belonged, he said, 'we who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, except through faith in Jesus Christ, we also believe in Christ Jesus'.[2]

Observe he now says that the uncircumcision is justified *by* faith and the circumcision *through* faith, provided that circumcision hold the righteousness of faith. For thus 'the Gentiles who followed not after righteousness have obtained righteousness, namely, the righteousness which is by faith: that is by asking it from God and not by presuming to derive it from themselves. But Israel although following after the law of righteousness did not arrive at the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Becanse it was not of faith but of works.'[3] They thought to work it of themselves: they did not believe that God worked in them. 'For it is God who worketh in us both to will and to work, according to His good pleasure.'[4] And this is why they 'stumbled against the stone of stumbling'.[5] For the meaning of the phrase 'because it was not of faith but as if of works,' he expounds most clearly when he says 'for being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and desiring to

[1] Gal. iii. 8. [2] Gal. ii. 15–16. [3] Rom. ix. 30–31.
[4] Phil. ii. 13. [5] Rom. ix. 32.

establish their own, they have not subjected themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth '.[1]

Can we then any further doubt what are the works of the Law by which a man is not justified, if he regards them as his own without the aid and gift of God, which comes ' by faith in Jesus Christ '? And shall we suppose it refers to circumcision and such like things, on the ground that similar remarks are read concerning these Sacraments also in other places? But neither in this instance was it circumcision which these man were desiring to establish as their righteousness. For God had established that by commanding it.

Nor can the reference be to those works concerning which the Lord said to them, ' Ye reject the commandment of God to establish your own traditions.' ' For Israel,' he says, ' following after the Law of righteousness did not arrive at the law of righteousness.'[2] He does not say following after their own traditions. The only difference therefore lies herein: that they ascribed to themselves (the power to fulfil the command) ' thou shalt not covet,' as also the other commandments, which are holy and good, and which God enables a man to do by working in him through the faith of Jesus Christ, who is the end for righteousness to every one who believes. That is that every man who is incorporated through the Spirit and made His member, is able, when Christ gives the increase

[1] Rom. x. 3-4. [2] Rom. ix. 31.

within, to work righteousness, concerning whose works He Himself has said 'without Me ye can do nothing.'

51. Now the righteousness of the Law is put forth for the reason that whoso does it shall live in it; and that when each man realizes his own weakness, he may advance, not of his own strength, nor by the letter of the Law itself [which is impossible] but through faith may gain for himself a justifier, and arrive at righteousness, and do it, and live in it. For the work which whoso doeth shall live in it is not performed except by the justified. Now justification is obtained by faith, concerning which it is written, 'say not in thy heart, who ascends into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down: or who descends into the depth? that is, to bring Christ back from the dead. But what does it say? The word is near thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is (he says) the word of faith which we preach; for if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved'.[1] So far as a man is saved to that extent he is righteous. For by this faith we believe that God even raises us also from the dead.

Meanwhile (He has done so) in the Spirit, that we may live soberly and justly and godly in this world, in the newness of His grace. Hereafter our flesh itself is to rise to immortality, which is the reward of the Spirit, which Spirit goes before (the flesh) in that order of resurrection which is appropriate to it, that is, in justification. 'For we are buried with Christ by

[1] Rom. x. 5-9.

baptism into death, that like as Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life'.[1]

Therefore by the faith in Jesus Christ we attain salvation, both as far as it is begun in us in reality, and as far as its accomplishment is waited for in hope. 'For every one who shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'[2] And the Psalmist says, 'How great is the multitude of thy pleasures, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden from those that fear Thee, and which Thou hast accomplished for those that hope in Thee'.[3] By the Law we fear God, by faith we hope in God: but from those who fear punishment is grace concealed. And when the soul labours under that fear, because it has not overcome its evil desires, and fear—that stern keeper—has not departed from it; let it flee by faith for refuge to the mercy of God, that he may give what He commands, and by infusing the sweetness of grace through the Holy Spirit, cause the command to have greater attractiveness than that which hinders obedience. And therefore great is the multitude of His pleasures: that is, the Law of faith, the love of God, written and shed abroad in the heart, brings it to pass to those that hope in Him, that the soul thus healed works good, not through fear of penalty but through love of righteousness.

52. Do we then by grace obliterate the freedom of the will? God forbid. On the contrary we establish the freedom of the will. For just as the Law is not obliterated by (the idea of) faith, but

[1] Rom. vi. 4. [2] Rom. x. 13. [3] Ps. xxx. 20.

is established by it, so is freedom of the will by grace. For the Law is not fulfilled except through freedom of the will. But by the law comes the knowledge of sin, by faith the obtaining of grace against sin, by grace the healing of the soul from the defect of sin, by the healing of the soul comes the freedom of the will, by the freedom of the will the love of righteousness, by the love of righteousness comes obedience to the law. Accordingly just as law is not obliterated but established by faith, because faith obtains grace whereby the law may be fulfilled, so freedom of the will is not obliterated by grace, but is established, because grace heals the will, and thereby righteousness is freely loved. All these things which I have systematically connected have their illustrations in Holy Scripture.

The law says, 'thou shalt not covet.'[1] Faith says, 'heal my soul for I have sinned against thee.'[2] Grace says, 'Behold thou art made whole, sin no more lest a worse thing happen unto thee.'[3] Health says, 'O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.'[4] Freedom of will says, 'Freely will I sacrifice unto thee.'[5] Love of righteousness says, 'The unrighteous have declared pleasures unto me, but not, O Lord, according to thy law.'[6] Why then should miserable men venture to pride themselves on their freewill before they are set free, or on their strength if they are already set free? Nor do they observe that the very word freewill speaks of freedom. 'For

[1] Exod. xx. 17.
[2] Ps. xl. 5.
[3] John v. 14.
[4] Ps. xxix. 3.
[5] Ps. liii. 8.
[6] Ps. cxix. 85.

where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.'[1] If then they are slaves of sin, why do they boast concerning the freedom of their will? For by whom a man is overcome, to him he is assigned in slavery. But if they are already free, why boast themselves as if the act was theirs, and glory as if they had not received it? Or are they free in such a sense that they do not desire to have Him as their Lord, Who says to them, 'Without Me ye can do nothing?'[2] and 'if the son hath set you free, then shall ye be free indeed'?[3]

53. The question may here be raised whether faith itself, which appears to be the beginning of salvation, or of that series which leads to salvation which I have mentioned, lies within our power. This we shall see more easily if we first consider somewhat carefully what is meant by power. For we must distinguish two things: the will and the power. He who has the will has not therefore the power, nor he who has the power therefore the will. For as we sometimes will what we have not the power to do, so sometimes we can do what we have not the will to do. The derivation of the words themselves is clear. The word *voluntas* comes from *velle* (to will). The word *power* (or ability) comes from *posse* (Meaning, to be able). Accordingly, as he who wills has the will, so he who is able has the power. But in order that the power to do should produce anything, the will must be present. For we do not call that an act of power which was done unwillingly. Although if we investigate deeper,

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 17. [2] S. J. xv. 5. [3] S. J. viii. 36.

even that which a man does under compulsion unwillingly is, if he does it, an act of his will. But because he would have preferred to do something else, therefore we are accustomed to say that he does it unwillingly, or against his will. He is compelled to do what he does by some evil which he wishes to avoid or remove from him. Now if the will is so strong that he prefers not to do this rather than not to have the other done to him, then undoubtedly he will resist compulsion, and he will not do it. Accordingly, if he does it, he does not act with full and complete freewill, yet he does not act except by will. And since the effect follows upon the will, we cannot say that power was lacking to the agent. For if yielding to compulsion he desired to act but could not, we say that the will was present, although under compulsion, but that the power was not present. But when he did not act because he did not will, the power was present indeed but the will was absent, so long as he resisted the pressure and did not act. Hence it is that those who compel or persuade are accustomed to say: why not do what lies in your power to escape this evil? And those who actually cannot do what others, believing them to be able, attempt to compel them to do, are accustomed to plead for themselves by way of answer: I would do it if it lay within my power. What have we then further to seek? What we denote by '*power*' is a state in which the will is accompanied by the ability to carry into effect. Hence every man is said to have a thing within his power which if he wills he does, and if he does not will, does not do.

54. Consider now the point which I have set forward for discussion: whether faith is in our power? The kind of faith which I have in view is that which we exhibit when we believe anything, not the kind which we give when we promise anything: although that also is entitled 'faith'. But there is a clear distinction between saying, he has no faith in me, and he has not kept faith with me. The former means he did not believe what I said; the latter that he has not done what he said. According to that faith whereby we believe, we are faithful to God: According to that faith by which a promise is fulfilled God, himself is faithful to us. For the Apostle says as much: 'God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able.' That is the kind of faith concerning which we inquire whether it is within our power: namely, the faith whereby we believe God, or believe in God. For hence it is written, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness;' and 'To him who believes in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness.' See now whether anyone believes if he does not will; or does not believe if he wills. And if that is absurd [for what else is to believe but to assent to the truth of what is propounded? Consent being a matter of the will]: then it follows that faith is in our power. But, as the Apostle said, 'there is no power but of God.' What reason is there then why the question should not be asked in this matter also, 'what hast thou which thou didst not receive?' For the power to believe is also God's gift. We nowhere read in Holy Scripture, there is no

will but of God. And there is reason that this is not written because it is not true. For otherwise, if there were no will but from Him, God would be also the author of sins: which God forbid. For an evil will is in itself already sin, even if it fail of its effect, that is, if it have not the power. Indeed since the evil will has received the power to fulfil what it desires, this comes from the judgment of God, with whom is no iniquity. He punishes indeed this way; nor indeed unjustly because secretly. But the unjust does not realize that this is punishment, unless through open penally he is unwillingly forced to feel how great the evil is which he willingly committed. This is what the Apostle says of certain men: 'God gave them over to the desires of their own hearts, to work what is not fitting.' Hence also Our Lord said to Pilate, 'Thou couldest have no power against me, unless it were given thee from above.' But the gift of power does not involve necessity. Thus when David had received the power of slaying Saul, he chose to spare rather than to smite. Hence we understand that the evil receive power to the condemnation of their own evil will, and the good to the commendation of their own good will.

55. Since then faith is in our power, for what any man wills he believes, and when he believes he does so willingly, it is further to be inquired, indeed to be considered again, what kind of faith it is which the Apostle commends with so much energy. For not every sort of belief is good. For if it be, why the saying, 'Brethren, believe not every Spirit, but prove the Spirit which is of God'? And

the phrase, 'believeth all things', which is placed among the praises of love, is not to be interpreted as if the refusal to believe at once whatever we hear, proved any defect of love. Does not the same love prompt us not easily to believe any evil concerning a brother, and judge that the province of love is rather to refuse to believe when anything of the kind is uttered? Finally, love itself, which believes all things, does not believe every spirit: for this reason that it believes all things indeed, but in God; for it is not said that love believes all men. Consequently there can be no doubt that the kind of faith which the Apostle commends is that whereby we believe in God.

56. But there is a further distinction to be drawn. For they also believe in God who are under the Law, and are induced by fear of punishment to try to work their own righteousness; and therefore are not working the righteousness of God, for that is the work of love. For nothing is pleasing to love save that which is lawful: whereas fear is compelled to regard in its work what is lawful, while it has something else in its will which would prefer that the unlawful were lawful, if it were only possible. These men also believe in God; for if they had no faith whatsoever, they would by no means fear the punishment of the Law.

But that is not the sort of faith which the Apostle commends when he says, 'for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba, Father.' Such fear is therefore servile. And although it involves faith in the same Lord, yet

it is not love of righteousness but fear of condemnation. For sons cry, Abba, Father : of which two words one represents the circumcision and the other the uncircumcision, ' of the Jew first and also of the Greek ': since there is one God who justifies the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith. But when men cry, it is because they ask for something. And what is it that they seek but that for which they hunger and thirst ? And what is that but what is referred to in the words ' blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled '. Let those then who are under the Law advance to this, so that they may be changed from slaves into sons. Not indeed in such a manner that they cease to be slaves, but that as sons they may freely serve their Lord and Father ; for this is what they have received. For He, the only Son, ' gave power to become the sons of God to those who believe in His Name.' And He encourages them to ask, to seek, to knock, that they may receive, and find, and it may be opened to them ; adding a rebuke in the words ' if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him ? ' When therefore the Law, which is the strength of sin, intensifies the sting of death, so that sin, taking occasion by the Commandment works all manner of desire ; from whom are we to seek for self-control, unless from Him Who knows how to give good gifts to His sons ? Or is not the foolish human being aware that no one can be self-controlled unless God gives the power ? Well then, in order to know this, he stands in need of

wisdom. Why then does he not hear the spirit of his Father, speaking by the Apostle of Christ, or Christ Himself, saying in His Gospel, 'ask and ye shall receive'? or speaking in His Apostle and saying, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives liberally to all and upbraideth not, and it shall be given unto him: but let him ask in faith, nothing doubting?'[1] This is the faith whereby the righteous lives. This is the faith whereby a man believes in Him Who justifies the ungodly. This is the faith whereby glorying is excluded, either by the dismissal of our self-esteem, or by the prominence of our glorying in the Lord. This is the faith which the fulness of the Spirit obtains, concerning which it is written, 'For we in the Spirit wait by faith for the hope of righteousness.'[2] Here indeed it may yet be inquired whether by the hope of righteousness he means the hope which righteousness feels, or the hope which men place in righteousness. For the righteous lives by faith and hopes for eternal life. And faith, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, advances in it, by the daily renewal of the inner man, and hopes to be satisfied therein in eternal life, where that which is spoken concerning God in the Psalms will be fulfilled, 'Who satisfies thy desire with good things.' This is the faith whereby men are saved to whom it was said 'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God: not of works, lest perhaps any man should boast, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus

[1] S. James i. 6. [2] Gal. v. 5.

for good works, which God has prepared for us to walk in.'

Finally, this is the faith which works by love, not by fear; not by alarm of penalty, but by love of righteousness. Whence therefore comes this love, by which faith works, unless from the source from which faith has obtained it? Nor would this (faith) be in us, so far indeed as it is in us, unless it were shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. The love of God which is said to be shed abroad in our hearts is not that love whereby He loves us, but that whereby He makes us to become His lovers. Just as the righteousness of God is that whereby through His gift we are made righteous; and the salvation of the Lord is that whereby He causes us to be saved; and faith of Jesus Christ is that whereby He makes us faithful. This is the righteousness of God which He not only teaches through the commands of the Law, but also gives through the gift of the Spirit.

57. But the next step is to enquire briefly whether this will to believe is itself a gift of God, or whether it is a property of that freedom of the will which is implanted in us by nature. For if we deny that it is a gift of God, the danger is that we shall think we have discovered something of our own. So that when the Apostle rebukes us with the question 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive? But if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou didst not receive it?' We shall be able to answer, see we have the will to believe. We did not receive this. We have something to glory in which we did not

receive. But if on the contrary we say that this capacity also of the will is nothing else but a gift from God, the danger is that the unbelieving and the ungodly will appear to be reasonably excused for their unbelief, on the ground that God has declined to give them the will.

For the saying, 'It is God who worketh in us both to will and to work according to His good pleasure'[1] applies to grace which faith obtains, and by which good works are rendered possible, which faith works by love, which love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. If faith is requisite to obtain this grace, and faith is an act of the will, the question is, whence does this act of the will arise? If from nature, why does it not exist in all men? Since all men have the same God as their Creator. But if it is God's gift, then also why does it not exist in all men? Since God wills that all men should be saved, and should come to the knowledge of the truth?[2]

58. Let us then in the first place maintain, and let us see whether it will suffice to our enquiry, that free-will is a natural endowment bestowed by the Creator on the rational soul; and that it is an intermediate power which can be either directed toward faith or turned to infidelity: and on this ground a man cannot be said to possess this will whereby he believes God as something which he has not received, although at the Divine call this will arise out of the freewill which man received by nature at his creation.

[1] Phil. i. 13. [2] 1 Tim. ii. 4.

But God desires that all men should be saved, and should come to the knowledge of the truth, not however in such a sense as to deprive them of free-will, by the good or evil use of which they are righteously judged. And when this comes to pass, the unbelieving indeed act contrary to the will of God, since they do not believe His Gospel. Nevertheless they do not overcome it, but deprive themselves of the greatest and highest good, and involve themselves in evil and in penalties, and will experience in punishment the power of Him among whose gifts is the mercy which they have despised. Thus the will of God ever remains unconquered. It would indeed be overcome if it knew not what to do with its despisers, or if in any way they could escape the fate which He assigns for such.

For if a person, for example, says, I will that all these my slaves shall work in my vineyard, and after labour shall rest and feast, and that whoso refuses to obey shall grind for ever in the mill : the slave who despised this direction may seem indeed to act against his master's will, and indeed would overcome that will, if in his disdain he could also escape the grinding at the mill. But that is exactly what is impossible under the power of God. Accordingly it is written, ' God speaks once ', that is unchangeably (although the passage may be also interpreted of God's only word). And then he adds what it is that is unchangeably spoken. ' Two things I have heard,' [1] he says : ' that power is of God, and that mercy O Lord is thine, for

[1] Ps. lxii. 12-13.

Thou shalt reward everyone according to his works.' He therefore who disdains to believe in God's mercy will be adjudged to condemnation under God's power, but whosoever shall believe, and yield himself to Him to be absolved from all his sins, and to be healed of all his defects, and to be kindled and illumined by God's fire and light, shall by His Grace have good works, through which even according to the body he shall be redeemed from corruption of death, and shall be crowned, and satisfied with good things, not temporal but eternal, above all that we ask or think.

59. This is the order which the Psalm observes wherein it is written, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His recompenses; Who forgives all thy misdeeds, Who heals all thy infirmities, Who redeems thy life from corruption, Who crowns thee with pity and compassion, Who satisfies thy desire with good things.' [1]

And lest perchance these good things should be despaired of, in the deformity of this old state, that is, of mortality, the Psalmist says, 'Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.' [2] As much as to say: what you have heard refers to the new man and to the new covenant. Review with me I beg you these matters once more, and contemplate with joy the praise of God's mercy, that is, of His grace. He says, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His recompenses'; He does not say His gifts, but His recompenses: for God returns good for evil.

[1] Ps. ciii. 2-4. [2] Ps. ciii. 5.

'Who forgives all thy sins:' that takes place in the Sacrament of Baptism. 'Who healeth all thy infirmities': herein the faithful is concerned during the present life, while the flesh desires against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that we do not the things that we would, while a different law in the members contends with the law of the mind, while to will is present but to perform what is good is not. If with persistent purpose we advance, the weaknesses of our old nature [1] are healed, as that nature is day by day renewed by faith which works by love. 'Who redeems thy life from corruption:' this will take place in the final resurrection of the dead. 'Who crowneth thee with pity and compassion': this comes to pass in the judgment, where, when the righteous king shall sit on His throne, to reward everyone according to his works; who will boast that his heart is pure? or boast that he is free from sin? This is the reason why he is bound to mention in this place the pity and the compassion of the Lord; for debts might seem to be so exacted, and deserts measured, that there could be no room for compassion. Therefore God crowns in pity and compassion, yet still in accordance with man's works. For one will be separated on the right hand, and to him it will be spoken, 'I was hungered and ye gave me to eat': since 'judgment is without compassion,' but 'to him who did not exercise compassion.' But 'blessed are the compassionate, for God will have compassion upon them.' Accordingly while they upon the left

[1] Languores vetustatis.

hand will go into eternal burning, the righteous will go into life eternal. For 'this is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the one true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.' By that knowledge, by that vision, by that contemplation, the soul's desire will be satisfied with good things. For satisfaction is only found, when there is no further object of desire, of longing or of demand. This satisfaction was his desire who said to the Lord Christ, 'Show us the Father and it sufficeth us;' and to whom the answer was given, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also.' 'For this is life eternal, that they may know Thee the One true God, and Jesus Christ Whom thou hast sent.' Now if he who has seen the Son has seen the Father also, it follows that he who sees both the Father and the Son also sees the Holy Spirit of the Father and of the Son. We do not therefore destroy the freedom of the will, and our soul blesses the Lord, and forgets not all His benefits. Nor does it ignore God's righteousness and desire to establish its own. But it believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, and it lives by faith, until it is advanced to sight; [1] that is, by faith which works by love. And this love is shed abroad in our hearts, not by the sufficiency of our own will nor by the letter of the Law, but by the Holy Spirit Who is given to us.

60. If this discussion is sufficient to solve our question, let it suffice. But perhaps the objection will be raised that we must beware lest any one suppose that sin, which is the product of freewill,

[1] Speciem.

must be ascribed to God, if on the ground of the text, ' what hast thou which thou didst not receive ?' even the will whereby we believe is regarded as a gift of God, because it springs from the freedom of the will which we received at our creation. If this objection is raised, let the objector consider and perceive that this will (to believe) is not only to be ascribed to God as the Giver, on the ground that it is a product of that freedom of the will, which was bestowed upon us by nature, simultaneously with our creation ; but also because God acts upon us to will and to believe through the influence of things seen. Sometimes (God acts upon us) from without, as through the instructions of the Gospel. For even the Commandments of the law contribute in some degree to this result, if they warn a man of his weakness, and impel him to flee by faith to justifying grace. Sometimes (God acts upon us) from within, for it is in no man's power to determine what thoughts shall enter his mind, but his assent or rejection depends upon his own will. When therefore by such ways as these God influences the rational soul to believe in Him (for it is impossible for anything to be believed by an act of the will, unless there is some influence or inducement to promote belief) it follows that God Himself works in man this will to believe, and in all things His compassion goes before us. But, as I said before, our assent to the divine inducement, or our rejection of it, depends upon our own will. Consequently the facts so far from weakening the statement ' what hast thou that thou didst not receive,' actually strengthen it. Indeed the soul cannot

receive and possess the gifts by which it hears this said except by its own assent. Accordingly it rests with God what they shall possess and what they shall receive: but the reception and possession is the act of the recipient and possessor. But now if any one drives us on to the consideration of that deep problem, why one man is so influenced as to be convinced, whereas another man is not, there are only two remarks which for the time I should desire to make. One is, 'O the depth of the riches' and the other is, 'Is there unrighteousness with God'? And if this answer fails to satisfy, let the inquirer look for men more learned, but let him take care lest he encounters the more self-confident.

61. Here then let me bring this Treatise to an end. Whether anything has been achieved by its voluminousness, I cannot tell. This does not refer to you (my dear Marcellinus). Of your faith I am well aware. I refer to the mental condition of those for whom you desired me to write: those men who oppose, I will not say my opinion, but (to put it mildly and without naming Him who spake through His Apostles) who, undoubtedly against the opinion of so great a man as the Apostle Paul, an opinion not merely stated in one solitary passage, but through a very earnest vigorous and acute controversy, preferred to maintain their own opinion, rather than to hear him beseeching by the compassion of God, and urging, 'through the Grace of God which is given to him, not to think more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God has given to each man a measure of faith.'

62. Consider then what the subject was which you propounded, and what this lengthy discussion has achieved. What disturbed you was the problem how it could be said that it was possible for a man to be without sin, by the divine assistance, if his own will did not fail: and yet that no one in this life has ever been, or is, or will be, of such perfect righteousness. My proposition in the treatise which I formerly wrote to you was, 'If I am asked whether it is possible for a man in this life to be without sin, I acknowledge that it is possible, by the Grace of God, and his own freewill. Nor do I doubt that the man's freewill is a product of God's Grace, that is, it is one of the Divine gifts; and this is the case not as far as concerns the existence of the will only, but also as concerning its quality; that is, in its conversion and obedience to the divine commands. Accordingly the Grace of God not only reveals what ought to be performed, but also assists, in order to render possible the ideal which it has revealed.' [1] To you however the idea of a thing being possible yet without example seemed absurd. Hence arose the problems of this book. It became my business to show that a thing might be possible although no example of it could be produced. In reply to this I set at the beginning of this discourse certain passages out of the Gospel and the Law, such as the passing of a camel through a needle's eye, and the twelve thousand legions of Angels, who might, had He willed it, have fought for Christ, and these nations of whom God said that

[1] De Pecc. Merit. ii. 7.

He could have destroyed them at once before the face of His people: none of which things took place. To these might be added what is read in the book of Wisdom, how many strange tortures God could have applied to the ungodly by using the creation which is obedient to His nod, though He did not apply them.[1]

Mention might also be made of the mountain which faith could cast into the sea: which yet I have never read or heard of as happening. But if any one were to say that any of these is impossible with God, you see how foolish he would be, and how he would be making assertions contrary to the mind of His Scripture.

Many other things of a similar nature may occur to one who reads or thinks, which we cannot deny to be within the range of divine power, although there exists no example of their occurrence.

63. But since the objection might be made that these works are works of God, whereas to live righteously belongs to the works of man, I undertook to prove that this also is a work of God, and this I have accomplished in the present treatise at greater length it may be than was required. But as opposing the enemies of the Grace of God I seem to myself to have said too little. And I am never so pleased to speak as when passages of the Sacred Scripture supporting me occur in profusion, when my purpose is that he who glories should glory in the Lord, and that in all things we should give thanks to the Lord our God,

[1] Wisd. xvi. 24.

lifting up our hearts to that place, whence every good gift and every perfect gift proceeds from the Father of lights. Now if it were not the work of God, because it is done by ourselves, or because we act through His gift; then neither is it the work of God that a mountain should be cast into the sea, because it was through the faith of men that our Lord affirmed that to be possible, and ascribed it to their work, saying, 'if ye shall have in you faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, go hence and be cast into the sea, and it will be done, and nothing will be impossible to you'. Clearly He says 'to you': not to Me or to My Father. And yet no man will ever do this unless by God's gift and co-operation. We may see then how perfect righteousness is unexampled in mankind, and yet it is not impossible. For it would be realized if will adequate to so great an end were brought to bear on it. And that would be the case if nothing pertaining to righteousness were concealed from us, and if righteousness were so to delight the mind that all hindrances whatsoever of pleasure or of pain were conquered by this delight. And if this is not so, it is not due to impossibility but to the judgment of God. For who is ignorant that man's knowledge is not within his power, and that it does not follow that a man will actually seek what he knows he ought to seek, unless it delights him as greatly as it deserves to be loved? but this is characteristic only of the healthy soul.

64. It is however possible that some one may suppose that nothing is lacking to our knowledge of righteousness, since the Lord 'finishing and cutting

short His word on earth,'[1] said, that all the law and the prophets depend on two commandments, nor did He keep silence about them, but declared them in the plainest of words. For he said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' What can be truer than that the fulfilment of these is the complete fulfilment of righteousness? But let him who realizes this realize also that in many things we all offend, while we think that our actions are pleasing God whom we love, or not displeasing Him; and yet, at a later time, we are warned by His Scriptures, or by some clear and unquestionable reason, and we learn that it did not please Him, and repent and pray Him to forgive. Human life is full of such experiences. But whence came this imperfect knowledge of His will, unless from our imperfect knowledge of Himself? 'For now we see through a mirror in a riddle, but then face to face.' Now can anyone venture to suppose that when that state is reached which is described as 'knowing even as I am also known', the love for God which shall exist in those who behold Him will be no more than exists in those who believe in Him now? Or that in any way the one can bear comparison with the other? Now if the greater the knowledge the greater will be the love, we must believe that our capacity for fulfilling righteousness is defective in proportion to the defectiveness of our love. But a thing can be known or believed without being

[1] Rom. ix. 28.

loved: but that which is neither known or believed cannot be loved. But if, by believing, the saints have been able to reach so great a love than which, as the Lord Himself declares, no greater in this life is possible, namely to lay down their lives for the Faith or for their brethren, unquestionably when we pass from this pilgrimage, in which we now walk by faith, and arrive at the actual vision which, not yet seeing, we hope for and by patience we await, our love will not only surpass what here we have on earth, but extend far beyond all that we can ask or think. And yet it is impossible for it to surpass a love with all the heart and all the soul and all the mind. There is nothing left in us which can be added to all that we possess; for if there were, then all that we possess would not be all. Accordingly this command of righteousness, which orders us to love God with all the heart and all the soul and all the mind, upon which follows the second command concerning love of our neighbour, will be fulfilled in that life wherein we shall see face to face. But the command is given to us in the present life, to warn us what we ought to ask by faith, whither to send forward our hope, and forgetting those things that are behind, reach forward to the things that are before. Therefore, as it appears to me, a man has much advanced in the acquisition of righteousness when he realizes by advancing how remote he is from the perfection of righteousness.

65. But if one speak of a lesser righteousness adapted to the present life, whereby the righteous lives by faith, although absent from the Lord, and therefore walks by faith and not by sight: it is

not absurd to say that even this righteousness ought to take heed not to sin.

For indeed if there cannot as yet be such a love of God as full and perfect knowledge would require, this is not to be instantly ascribed to our fault. For it is one thing not to have attained to perfect love, it is another to have no desire to attain to it. Wherefore although a man loves God far less than he will be able to love Him when He is seen, yet he ought at least to seek after nothing which is forbidden: just as in matters which concern our physical senses, the eye is able not to delight itself in any darkness, although it is not able to fix itself upon the most brilliant light.

But let us now suppose a human soul so constituted in this corruptible body, that although it has not yet by that supreme perfection of Love toward God absorbed and destroyed all movement of earthly passion, yet lives in that degree of lesser righteousness as not to consent by any inclination to work that evil passion. Now to that life already immortal belongs the precept, 'thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy strength'; but to this lower life 'let not sin reign in your mortal body to obey the desires thereof': to the former, 'thou shalt not covet'; to the latter 'go not after thy desires': to the former it belongs to seek nothing further than to persist in that perfection; to the latter that a man should work on what he has in hand, and hope for its perfection as his reward. So in that higher life the righteous man liveth without end in that sight which he has desired in this life, while in the lower life the righteous man lives by faith in which

he desires the higher life which is its certain end. (On this understanding it will be seen if a man who lives by faith consents at times to any unlawful pleasure: not merely in committing dreadful crimes and wickednesses, but also even in lighter things; such as yielding his attention to something which ought not to be heard, or his tongue to something which ought not to be spoken; or if he so thinks something in his heart as to wish an evil pleasure were permissible, when he knows it by the commandment to be unlawful: even such consent as this belongs to sin, and would be carried into effect unless the penalty terrified). Have righteous persons of this description, living indeed by faith, no need to say, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?' And do they prove that it is falsely written 'in Thy sight shall no man living be justified?' And, 'If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.' And, 'For there is no man that will not sin?' And, 'There is no righteous person on earth who will do good and not sin?' For not one of these testimonies speak concerning the past, that is that the man has sinned, but of the future, that is, that he will sin: to say nothing of other passages where Holy Scripture declares this principle.

But since it is impossible that these statements should be false, the inference is quite plain, that whatever quality or extent we can ascribe to righteousness in the present life, there is no man in it who is absolutely free from sin. For every man must necessarily give so that it may be given to him, and forgive that he may be forgiven. Whatever he may have of

righteousness, he must not presume, as if it were derived from himself, since it comes from the Grace of God Who makes men righteous. And he must still hunger and thirst after righteousness from Him Who is the living bread, and with Whom is the fountain of life, Who so works righteousness in His saints, as they struggle in the temptation of this present life, that it is nevertheless what He freely gives to those that ask and what He mercifully forgives to those who confess.

66. But let these men discover, if they can, any one living under the burden of this corruption, in whom God has nothing to forgive. For except they confess that such a person has been enabled to become such as this, not through the instruction of a Law given to him, but even through the infusion of the Spirit of Grace, they involve themselves in the guilt of no ordinary crime but of the very essence of ungodliness. It is true that, if they receive in the right spirit those divine declarations, they cannot possible find such a person. But still we must by no means maintain that the possibility does not exist for God of so aiding the human will that not only the righteousness which is of faith may be completely realized in a human being here on earth, but even that righteousness which is to be realized in eternity in the actual contemplation of God. Although if God were now to will in any person that this corruptible should put on incorruption, and bid him live on earth among dying men a life without dying, whereby all his ancient condition being obliterated, no law within his members should oppose the law of the mind, and

he should know God everywhere present, even as the saints shall know Him hereafter: who will be so senseless as to dare to assert that with God this is impossible? Men indeed raise the question, why then does not God do it: but the objectors do not consider their human limitations. I know that neither impossibility nor iniquity exists with God. I know also that He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. I know also that to him to whom there was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure, it was said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for strength is made perfect in weakness.'[1]

There exists therefore something in the deep and secret judgments of God whereby it comes to pass that every mouth of the righteous should be silenced in His praise, and should not be closed except in the praises of God. But what this something is, who is liable to search out and find out and know? 'For so unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out. For who has known the mind of the Lord, and who has been His counsellor? or who first gave to Him and it will be requited unto him again? for of Him and through Him and in Him are all things: to Whom be glory for ever and ever. AMEN.'[2]

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 9. [2] Rom. xi. 33-36.

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